A LINK BETWEEN FLEMISH MYSTICS AND ENGLISH MARTYRS

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A LINK BETWEEN FLEMISH MYSTICS AND ENGLISH MARTYRS

FRONTISPIECE

A LINK BETWEEN FLEMISH MYSTICS AND ENGLISH MARTYRS

BY C. S. DURRANT

With a Preface by His Eminence
CARDINAL BOURNE
Archbishop of Westminster

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SOUTHWARCI,
Die 21^{a} *Novembris*, 1924.

Made and Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

FLEMISH Mystics and English Martyrs would seem to have but slight connection. Taken separately they are little known to, and hardly appreciated by, Englishmen of the present day outside those who share with both the kinship and unity of religious faith. The latter even know them all too little, and for the most part give them only such appreciation as comes from accepting the fact that they both belong to the history of the Catholic Church. Flemish Mystics are hardly known at all except by those who are interested in the development of mystic union with God. English Martyrs are known in their heroic resistance to the men who strove to destroy the Catholic life of England, but the growth of spiritual life which their sons and daughters and spiritual offspring fostered across the seas, when England could nurture it no longer, is a glorious page unread by all but a very few.

The book now given to us will fill a space that ought not to remain unoccupied in the minds of those to whom the ever-renewed fecundity of the Catholic Church is a constant proof of her Divine origin, or who always welcome new evidence of the intensity of the spiritual life which characterized our countrymen whenever and wherever that same Catholic Church was unhampered in her influence upon them.

Flanders, or, to use another wider description, the Low Countries, were blessed by God in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with a wonderful and far-reaching spiritual illumination, culminating, as far as lasting effect is considered, in the writing and diffusion of the *Imitation of Christ*. We can never know enough of Ruysbroeck, of Florentius, of Gerard Groote, of Thomas à Kempis, of the Brothers of Common Life, of the Canons and Canonesses Regular of that period. Souls were brought by them very close to God in a manner freer and less formal than that which became prevalent at a later time—a manner full of encouragement and of guidance for so many souls at the present day who have, perchance, been kept too far from the Master's feet by over-systematic tracing of the avenues of approach. They will find a wider entry and a more bracing atmosphere if they turn to the older Mystics of the period of which we speak.

Divine Providence so guided the steps of English maidens in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that they found in this Flemish source of spiritual life the home of those aspirations which the savage laws of the Protestant persecutor made unattainable at home. Thus they were able, while their kinsfolk were being done to death or harried by loss of their possessions in England, to maintain, build up, and preserve for a better future, the cloistered life of dedication to God's service which had been so glorious a feature of their country as long as it was united to the Apostolic See.

Thus the offshoot of Catholic English heroism was grafted on this old Flemish mystic tree with results glorious to contemplate. The following pages will tell the story of the first foundation at Louvain,* soon to give birth to the ever young English Convent of Nazareth at Bruges, destined in turn to be in our day the parent of the Priory of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Haywards Heath. Together these houses guard jealously the traditions of Windesheim and the memory of our English Martyrs, a double heritage indeed magnificent. They stand together, one more subsidiary evidence of the falseness of those theories of continuity so fondly imagined in these later times whereby the Established Church of England, which, in separating itself from apostolic unity, destroyed all that was characteristic of the existing faith of this country, would claim to be identical with that Catholic Church which in weal or woe has steadfastly preserved those characteristics together with the unity which is their unfailing source. Our English maidens seeking among the Flemish Mystics the religious life denied to them at home would have made quick and sharp retort to the inventors of a continuity so harsh and strange in consequence to them.

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* Still enjoying unbroken continuity in the two well-known Priories, St Augustine's, Newton Abbot, and St Monica's, Hoddesdon.

May they now with God, in company with those in whose mystic society they found themselves at once again at home, in spite of language, habits, and customs, quite unlike our own, plead before the Throne for the hastening of the day when all of both races may be brought into that unity of faith and fervour of practice for which Flemish Mystics prayed and English Martyrs died.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.

Feast of St Thomas of Canterbury,
December 29, 1924.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ORDER OF CANONS REGULAR

THE origin of the Order of Canons Regular (not to be confounded with that of the Hermits of St Augustine) has been made the subject of a discussion often carried on with acrimony. While the historians of the Order itself* have claimed for it no less than apostolic origin, others† have treated the old and cherished tradition, like that by which the Carmelites trace their origin to the solitaries of Mount Carmel, as an assertion which modern historical research does not justify. It would be quite beyond the scope of this work to enter into the discussion, but in the Chronicle of Windesheim, written by a Canon Regular of the fifteenth century, we shall find so many allusions to the "apostolic life" that it is necessary to refer to the fact admitted by all, that from apostolic times there have existed in the Church communities of clerics and also virgins who made it their aim to continue the manner of life taught by the Apostles to the first Christians, and therefore "had all things in common." Foremost among those whom this ideal captivated was St Augustine of Hippo, who, in the fourth century, gathered around him clerics with whom, says his disciple Possidius, "coepit vivere secundum regulam sub sanctis apostolis constitutam." This life in common was adopted by many among the clergy, and St Augustine's own sister, Perpetua, was at the head of a community of women to whom, on her death, he addressed the letter known later on as the "Rule of St Augustine."

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* Pennotto: *Historia Tripartita Sacri Ord. Cleric. Canonic. Amort, Benvenuti, etc.* Dom Paul Benoit: *La vie des Clercs dans les siècles passés* (Maison de la Bonne Presse, rue Bayard, Paris). Dom Ildephonsus Pisani: *Notice historique sur l'Ordre apostolique des Chanoines Réguliers* (Oudin, rue de l'Eperon, Poitiers). See also the article on "Canons Regular" by Dom Allard in the *Catholic Encyclopedia.*

† See article in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne* (edited by Abbot Cabrol, O.S.B.) and those on "Monasticism and Religious Orders" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.*

But the various communities which were soon established, though looking to St Augustine as their legislator, and to the community of Hippo as their model, did not form an " Order " as we now understand the word. The bond of union was in the fact that each practised the common life according to what was handed down by tradition as having been the manner of life led by the Apostles, of which the Acts give us so many details; and in the writings of St Augustine* they found the way in which his master-mind applied these to actual circumstances. The communities thus founded spread from Africa to Italy and France, and thence to other countries of Europe.

It was inevitable that many abuses and much falling off from the primitive fervour should occur, and indeed not all those who thus lived in common were religious. A new era opened with the synod of the Lateran, held in 1059, which exhorted all clergy in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches to lead strictly the common life as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles.

The clergy of the Lateran Basilica set the example, and from this time dates the clear distinction between regular and secular canons. All those willing to embrace the perfection of religious life and to bind themselves by vow accepted the prescriptions which St Augustine had given either to his clergy or to the nuns under his government. Henceforth the " Rule of St Augustine " becomes the recognized form of life, he and his clerics having set the true type of canonical and apostolic life.

The Congregations belonging to the Canonical Order have always retained the same ideal which inspired the great Doctor—that of living the life led by the early Christians as described in the Acts of the Apostles. It has ever been their aim to live " secundum regulam sub sanctis apostolis constitutam." When, as too often in the old Orders, abuses have crept in with riches, reforms have always harked back to the life in common led by Christ and His Apostles, by the primitive Christians, and after their example by St Augustine and his disciples.

The Rule of St Augustine springs from that conception of Christian life which the Apostles received from Christ Himself; it does not contain precise and detailed regulations; to give such would not have been consonant with the nature of its writer; he was one who, like St Francis of Assisi in later times, could not but leave much to the spirit of love. "In this," we read in the preface to Hugh of St Victor's *Exposition of the Rule of St Augustine*, "appears the excellency of St Augustine's Rule, which does not so much tend to prescribe orders for each kind of virtue as other Rules do, but to inspire Charity, which embraces them all and causes them to be practised in perfection"; and again, "Persons who make a public profession of renewing the spirit of Charity which animates the Primitive Christians, such ought to love God in a perfect manner. This is the first disposition which ought to appear in those who would engage themselves to live according to the Rule of St Augustine." This, then, is what members of the Canonical Order should be; this should be their ideal, as it was that of the great Doctor and Bishop of Hippo. Those who hold the theory of the apostolic origin of the Order of the Canons Regular believe that as St Augustine's teaching has impressed all theology for sixteen centuries, as his mysticism has formed the greatest school of mystics in the Church, so his conception of religious life has persevered through the centuries and still lives in the Canonical Order.

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* Sermons 355 and 356 " De moribus clericorum," Epistola 211; *Retract.*, ii, 21, etc.

The communities of Canons Regular were at first autonomous and independent, but gradually there arose a tendency to coalesce either according to districts or for purposes of mutual help, and thus Congregations were formed. That of the Most Holy Redeemer (commonly called of the *Lateran*, because its Canons were attached to the service of the Pope's own Cathedral Church, the Basilica of St John Lateran) is the most ancient and important. It was in 492 that St Gelasius introduced among its Canons the manner of life he had followed at Hippo.

Other celebrated Congregations were those of St Frigdian of Lucca (556); of St Chrodegang (747), who, however, wrote a Rule in which he blended that of St Benedict with the regulations of the Lateran Canons; the Congregation of St Bernard of Mentone, so well known on account of the hospital of St Bernard, still served by Canons Regular; the Congregation of St Victor, founded at Paris by William of Champeaux in 1010, which produced the celebrated mystic school of Hugh and Richard of St Victor; the Congregation of St Rufus at Avignon, founded in the middle of the eleventh century, of which

Adrian IV, the only English Pope, was once Abbot; that of Holy Cross of Coimbra, of which St Antony of Padua was at one time a member; the Congregation of the Holy Sepulchre; and that of the Holy Redeemer at Bologna (also called Renana).*

The Aroasian Congregation, founded in the Diocese of Arras in 1097, was introduced into Ireland by St Lawrence O'Toole, and many of the houses in England and Scotland belonged to it. The Canons Regular in these countries were generally called "Austin Canons" or "Black Canons."

No one would assert that these Congregations had the same close bond of union as exists in more modern Orders, but in all was the same Rule, that of St Augustine, and though each Congregation had its own Constitutions, yet their position differs entirely from that of those religious who have taken the Rule of St Augustine, while constituting an Order quite distinct from that of the Canons Regular, as, for instance, the Dominicans, the Servites, and, among women, the Ursulines, the Visitandines, etc.

The Premonstratensians, founded by St Norbert in 1120, are Canons Regular following the Rule of St Augustine, but they and the Gilbertines, founded by St Gilbert of Sempringham in the twelfth century (the only Order of English origin), are generally considered as constituting new Orders rather than reforms of the Canons Regular, for, properly speaking, that cannot be called a "reform" which does not merely go back to what was primitive, but introduces new elements.

Before passing to the history of the Congregation of Windesheim, it may be well to give some idea of the spirit and aim of the Order to which it belonged.

The Canon Regular is primarily and essentially a cleric, professing the religious life, bound by the three vows and a Rule approved by the Church. Whilst most religious have a specific scope apart from the service of their churches, as teaching, preaching, or missionary work, the Canon Regular has none, though he may undertake any kind of work not incompatible with the clerical state. St Thomas Aquinas says: "The Order of Canons Regular is necessarily constituted by religious clerics, because they are essentially destined to those works which relate to the Divine Mysteries, whereas it is not so with the monastic Orders."

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* A Congregation of Canonesses especially devoted to education was founded by St Peter Fourier in 1623. It is widely spread in France and has made foundations in America.

Thus we may say that the spirit of the Order is essentially sacerdotal; it is the only one among the ancient Orders which, long before the cry for the necessity of "more priests" was heard, was so constituted that its members were destined normally for the priesthood. Their aim is the perfect fulfilment of the Church's great duty of praise in its liturgical service, and the complete exercise of the sacerdotal ministry. "If we were to analyze the spirit of the Canonical Order," a Canon Regular has said, "we should find it would resolve itself into the pure spirit of the Church."

The Canonesses Regular are obliged to the public recitation of those liturgical Hours which form with the Mass one whole scheme of Divine Worship. Those who embrace this manner of life should fulfil the type of soul thus described by a contemporary writer:* "There are some who make this worship an end, and the principal matter of an activity which is entirely devoted to adoration. What others give to study, to the apostolate, or bodily charity, these find well to offer to the service of the altar. They are beings of praise. They make all centre in the chant, the psalmody, ceremonies, the varied rites by which our interior religion is signified . . . they squander their time before God. . . .

"And it is to these particularly that the Church confides her liturgy, for since they belong entirely to God, they are the best instruments of prayer. They make of it a more continuous and more perfect praise. . . . They act as the representatives of mankind, forgetful, distracted, obsessed or refractory. . . . It is they who by the Church's commission compose for the Eucharist that accompaniment which is most honourable and most profitable for us. They surround it with the glorious cortège of the Hours. By means of the liturgical cycle, whose course has this very mystery for its centre, with the Hours revolving about the Mass, the week about the Sunday, the year about Easter, they prepare hearts for the coming of grace, and ensure the diffusion of the sacramental idea. . . . It must be understood that solemn worship is charity, and a very precious act of apostolate in itself. . . . Can we fail to realize that since it has the value of prayer, it transfers its effect to all the undertakings with which it is connected by the spirit of faith? God does not keep for Himself what we give Him. . . . The greatest monastic apostles have sanctified themselves in order to sanctify others; they have consecrated to God their own personal worship before offering Him eventually the worship of others."

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* *The Church*, by A. D. Sertillanges. Translated by A. G. McDougall. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne.

In the following pages we shall see how a Congregation devoted to liturgical prayer and humble hidden labour became in God's Hands the instrument of a great revival of religious fervour in the cloister and in the world of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

PART I

FLEMISH MYSTICS

I

BLESSED JOHN RUYSBROECK

(Father of the Mystics of the Low Countries)

In one of those beautiful passages in which St Augustine rejoices in the praises of the mother to whom he owed so much, he tells us that she had learned wisdom " in the school of the heart." It was the school in which he himself was a proficient. The writer of an article on St Augustine in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says: " We believe that the dominating characteristic of Augustine's genius and the true secret of his influence are to be found in his heart—a heart that penetrates the most exalted speculations of a profound mind and animates them with the most ardent feeling. But heart alone does not account for his power. If none of the Fathers has put so much of his heart into his writings, neither has any turned upon the truth the searchlight of a stronger, clearer intellect . . . thus may Augustine's universal influence in all succeeding ages be explained: it is due to combined gifts of heart and mind."

This due balance between intellect and will, between arid speculation and the loving contemplation that leads to imitation, has ever been the characteristic of the true Augustinian mystic. Such a one was Blessed John Ruysbroeck, the sublimity of whose doctrine gained him the title of " The Admirable " and the " Divine Doctor," while his writings and his life show him to have been in very truth a student in " the school of the heart."

In the fourteenth century in which he lived, the tendency of the Schools was to speculative and theoretical mysticism—that of Ruysbroeck is contemplative and practical. The writers of the Schools made of mysticism a scientific study; Ruysbroeck treated it as a means of sanctity. While the former used the terminology of Scholastic Theology, Ruysbroeck employed the language of the people, whom he desired to instruct, to edify, and to lead to the love of God which shall endure when "knowledge shall have been destroyed."

Blessed John Ruysbroeck was born in 1293, in the village of Ruysbroeck near Brussels, to which fact he

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probably owes his name. Nothing is known of his father. His mother loved him tenderly, and gave him a Christian education; yet her fondness for her son was such that she dreaded the separation which his studying for the priesthood would entail, and the boy, who felt God's call, fled from his home at the age of eleven to put himself under the care and direction of an uncle, John Gerelmus or Hinckaert, who was a Canon of St Gudule in Brussels. It must have been no ordinary fidelity which enabled the child to inflict this pain on his mother, for, as we so often find in the history of the saints, the tie between them was very strong. Later on she followed her son to Brussels, and, rejoicing to hear the praises of his holiness on the lips of all, she would ask of him spiritual counsel, and gave herself to God in the religious life. After her death she frequently appeared to him, and would say: "My beloved son, how eagerly I look forward to the day when thou shalt be a priest; the delay seemeth long to me."

After his first Mass, Ruysbroeck had the consolation of once more seeing his mother, who told him that by its merits she had been delivered from the flames of Purgatory.

He was now twenty-four years of age, and his uncle obtained for him a chaplaincy at St Gudule, the still unfinished Collegiate Church of Brussels. They lived together in great seclusion, with one like-minded with themselves, a wealthy Master of Arts, Franco of Coudenberghe (de Frigidomonte), and, putting their goods in common, they gave themselves up to the spiritual life and contemplation.

Ruysbroeck had frequented the schools in Brussels during only four years, and had made no mark in them; the whole bent of his mind was towards heavenly things, and he soon gave up all study but that of Theology. In this he made such progress as to astonish all, and he became the champion of orthodoxy against the prevailing errors of Quietism, which has been aptly called "mysticism run mad." The Quietism of the fourteenth century in the Low Countries was not the more refined form of the heresy taught three centuries later by Madame Guyon, which influenced even the saintly Fénelon, but its fundamental tenets were the same, leading under pretext of liberty of spirit to the most shameful excesses. At the head of the sect in Brussels was a certain woman, who excited such admiration among the people that they believed that two seraphim accompanied her when she

The Monastery of Groenendael

The Chase in the Forest of Soignes

To face page 5

approached the Holy Table. Even among the clergy some were deceived by her, but Ruysbroeck unmasked the false spirituality of the miserable creature. No one more than this true contemplative condemns the idle repose of Quietism or insists more on the union of action with contemplation. He, who, like his father St Augustine, may well be called " an angel whose eyes are fixed on the bright sun of the Trinity," gave himself up to the humblest labour; and, writing to one of his spiritual daughters, tells her " that were she rapt to the highest heaven in ecstasy and learned that a sick person had need of her, she should awake from her ecstasy and hasten to render the service required: ' Leave God for God; thou shalt lose nothing thereby.' "

As the years went by and his attraction to contemplation deepened, Ruysbroeck yearned for greater seclusion than he could find in the city; his companions shared his desires, and at the suggestion of Coudenberghe they chose for their place of retirement the forest of Soignes, near Brussels.

Here they took up their abode, the hermit Lambert* " humilibus humiliter locum cedens " (Pomerius) consenting to remove to another spot. By letters patent of John III, Duke of Brabant, dated April 16, 1343, " the place called Groenendael† conceded by our predecessors for a hermitage to be constructed in our forest of Soignes, with the great fish-pond adjacent to it, is conferred and given in perpetuity to our beloved in Christ, the Lord Franco of Frigidomonte."

A small chapel was built, and six years later, following the advice of Pierre des Saules, Abbot of St Victor in Paris, who himself visited them, they took upon themselves the Rule of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, and henceforth wore the white habit of the Order.

Franco of Coudenberghe was appointed Provost (an office which was later on suppressed) and Ruysbroeck became the first Prior of the new Monastery. Very beautiful are the stories of those early days in the Green Valley, recalling in their quaint simplicity those which give so much charm to the "Fioretti." The Saint of Assisi would surely have gladly received among his first companions such a one as John of Afflighem, known as the *bonus cocus* on account of the cheerfulness and devotedness with which he discharged his humble duties. This simple lay-brother most wonderfully united action to contemplation, a grace, says Surius, that he obtained by his deep and continual meditation on the sufferings of Christ. While most assiduous in serving the brethren, and waiting courteously on any visitors who came to consult the holy Prior, he is said to have equalled him in his gift of contemplation. In the midst of his lowly work in the kitchen he would jot down his thoughts on spiritual subjects, and his works are still extant in two large MS. volumes kept in the Burgundian Library in Brussels. Sometimes the *bonus cocus* would be visited by transports of Divine Love even in the Refectory; on one such occasion, unable to contain himself, he broke out into a quaint rhyme in honour of the saint of the day; the Prior would have silenced him, but, looking at him, he saw his countenance illumined by such heavenly joy that he refrained from making any observation. Brother John, the Augustinian lay-brother, would indeed have been at home with Brothers Giles and Juniper of the Friars Minor. On his tomb at Groenendael was the inscription: "Reliquiae fratris Joannis de Leewis, vulgo Boni Coci, viri a Deo illuminati et scriptis mystici clari; obiit anno MCCCLXXVII, V Februar." Franciscan-like, too, is the story of the touching solicitude of the Prior for the birds. When the great trees in the forest were leafless and the snow lay heavy on their bare branches and covered the ground, the brethren, who knew his love for all God's creatures, would go to him and say: "Pater, jam ningit; quid facient miserae aviculae?" ("Father, the snow has come; what will the poor little birds do?"); and the Prior would take care to provide food for them. Sometimes the quiet of the Green Valley would be disturbed by the huntsman's horn and the baying of hounds, and the Duke of Brabant and his train would sweep by, for the forest* abounded with all the wild animals then to be found in Belgium, and the neighbourhood of Groenendael was a favourite meeting-place for the hunt.

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* Lambert was the third hermit who had taken up his abode in this hermitage; the first who settled there in 1304 was John de Busco (or des Bois) " oriundus de sanguine ducis Brabantiae "; the second, Arnold of Diest, prophesied on his deathbed that a Monastery would be built there " in quo viri Deo devoti et religiosi, Domino fideliter ministrabunt " (Pomerius).

† Viridis Vallis, Valvert or Vauvert, La Verde Valle, are forms of the name found in the old Chronicles.

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* "Of it," says Sanderus, in his *Chorographia sacra Brabantiae*, might be affirmed what Louis XI boasted of his royal forests:

"Mille mei canibus, silva ferebat apros,
Caprea, dama, lepus, omnia Regis erant."

For centuries an oak-tree was pointed out in the forest of Soignes, under which met seven crowned heads, Charles V being the first named and Muley Hassan, King of Tunis, the last.

But, save on such occasions, the quiet of the forest was unbroken, and Ruysbroeck, says his biographer, Surius, finding the solitude for which his soul had longed, "renewed his youth like the eagle," and fixed his gaze on the splendour of the Eternal Sun with a clearness of vision that few attain to in this life. He would never speak in public on spiritual subjects unless he felt the grace of the Holy Spirit urging him to do so; and sometimes when he had to address either his brethren or persons high in rank and power, he would begin hesitatingly, "as if the Spirit of God had left him." At such times he would lean his head on his hand for a few minutes and remain silent and recollected; then with humble simplicity he would say: "My children, God gives me nothing for you to-day." But he never failed to help anyone who came to consult him in private, whether because they were in temptation or anxious to make progress in the spiritual life.

On such occasions he would open to them the treasures of his own heart; words "sweet as honey" flowed from his lips, and when, as was often the case, these heavenly colloquies began after Compline, the fire which inflamed his own soul so communicated itself to his hearers that their hearts burned within them; they forgot the hour, and the bell for midnight Matins would ring without any having felt fatigue; nay, they were more disposed to chant the praises of God fervently than if they had enjoyed the repose the Rule allowed.

Sometimes the enemy of mankind would appear to him in frightful shapes, but he had recourse to God in simple confidence and other visions would succeed, full of consolation. Thus Our Lord once appeared to him accompanied by Our Blessed Lady, and a multitude of saints, and Jesus embraced His servant and presented him to His Mother and to the heavenly court, saying: "This is My chosen son."

Blessed John Ruysbroeck's devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and especially to Mass, was most ardent. When celebrating the Holy Mysteries, grace was often poured so abundantly on him that he was rapt in ecstasy, his bodily senses failed, and it was some time before he could continue. It happened once that at the moment of the Consecration he was so ravished that without a special help from God he must have died of the excess of joy experienced. The server feared he would expire at the foot of the altar, and after the Mass informed the Provost of what had taken place; Franco van Coudenberghe, full of anxiety, called the holy old man and urged him to omit celebrating Mass for some days. But Ruysbroeck humbly pleaded: "My Father, do not forbid me, for what has happened is not the result of age or infirmity; but at the Elevation Jesus Christ showed Himself to me and said with unutterable sweetness: 'Thou art all Mine and I am all thine.'"

Blessed John Ruysbroeck's writings bear witness to his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, of which he treats especially in the *Book of the Blessed Sacrament*.

His works seem to have been composed directly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He himself told Gerard Groote that he never wrote unless he felt this inspiration and a singular presence of the Blessed Trinity within his soul. At such times he would go into the depths of the forest (*in abdita silva*), and there write of those "secrets of the kingdom of God" which it was given him to contemplate.

One day, when thus engaged, he fell into an ecstasy; his brethren in the Monastery, noticing his prolonged absence, grew anxious and set out to seek him. They dispersed in various directions, threading the woodland pathways towards those spots which they knew he frequented. Long they sought in vain; at last one of the Canons, who was especially intimate with him, penetrated yet further into the heart of the great forest, and was startled to behold a bright light shining through the trees; as he advanced, he saw the Prior seated under a lime-tree which appeared all on fire, and a great belt of light encircled it as a moat surrounds a fortress. The brother drew near in silence with reverent awe, and found Ruysbroeck ravished in ecstasy, and it was some time before he came to himself and was able to return to the Monastery.*

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* Ruysbroeck's tree was long pointed out in the forest of Soignes. During the religious wars of the sixteenth century the Canons were forced to flee, and on their return they grieved to find the venerated tree dead, but they invoked the holy Prior who had rested under its branches, and, if the legend speak truth, it revived in the next spring, put forth abundant foliage, and grew to such a height as to overtop all the other trees.

Of the works thus composed,* Surius, who translated them into Latin, says: "No one has reached such heights as not to find in them something still higher. . . . His very word is a word of salvation, and it is God alone who speaks."

Denis the Carthusian tells us: "He had no teacher but the Holy Ghost. . . . His works are so profound as to be beyond all praise."

The Jesuit Lessius writes of them: "Their author must be ranked among the most sublime contemplatives and the princes of the mystical science."

A modern author† affirms: "Ruysbroeck led his disciples and especially his religious subjects to the very highest degree of Christian perfection, to the summit of the mystic ladder, unto God Himself. He did so by his examples and his words, but above all by his writings"; and the reader is referred for corroboration of this statement to the old authors, Pomerius, Surius, Denis the Carthusian, etc.

Ernest Hello, who has translated parts of the works of the great mystic into French, speaks of him with boundless admiration: "Amongst those who, soaring above the light of human reason, have penetrated the divine darkness which surrounds the throne of God, the most illustrious are Dionysius the Areopagite and John Ruysbroeck the Admirable. Dionysius enlightens, Ruysbroeck kindles the flame. Both are blinded with excess of light, the sphere of both is on the mountain top, but both stoop to try to make themselves heard below. They speak through charity to other men, but silence is their element."

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* Gerson, the celebrated Chancellor of the Paris University, brought an accusation of Pantheism against Ruysbroeck on account of some passages in the third book of his *Spiritual Espousals*, but it was successfully refuted by Arnold of Schoonhoven, one of the disciples of the great mystic; and as the Abbé Hoornaert points out in his most interesting work: *Sainte Thérèse, Ecrivain*, p. 68, no work of Ruysbroeck has ever been placed on any index. Abbot Butler in his *Western Mysticism* says: "Ruysbroeck constantly protects himself against this (the suspicion of pantheistic tendencies) by repeated assertions that the soul never, in this life or in the next, can be so transformed in God as to lose its individuality or its proper essence. The recent confirmation of his cultus as a Beatus, with concession of Mass and Office, by the Holy See in 1908, must be taken as an official recognition of the soundness of his doctrine and its immunity from Pantheism or other taint" (p. 10).

† Auger in *Les Mystiques des Pays-Bas au Moyen-Age*, now unfortunately out of print.

The Benedictines of St Paul de Wisques (now at Oosterhout, Holland), who are bringing out an excellent edition of Ruysbroeck's works, do not hesitate to say: "Ruysbroeck describes the different phenomena of the interior life and the progress of the soul therein with such clearness that even St Teresa and St John of the Cross have not equalled him."

These writings spread the reputation of Ruysbroeck far and wide, and the influence which emanates from saints, however much they may strive to remain hidden, drew to the Green Valley many visitors. Throughout Brabant, Flanders, Holland, Germany and France, his fame was noised abroad, and among the crowds who came to ask his counsel was "a celebrated doctor of the Order of Preachers" whom Surius identifies with Tauler.

A certain woman longed to mingle with the multitudes who went to see Ruysbroeck, but she fell ill and was unable to satisfy her desire; the anguish of her soul was great. One day she beheld the holy Prior by her side: "Tell me, my daughter," he said kindly, "what dost thou?" "Alas," she answered in deep dejection, "I do nothing; I can no longer serve the sick as was my wont, and I have lost the interior sense of God's Presence which I formerly experienced." "My daughter," said Ruysbroeck, "hold for certain that this is the highest and most precious sacrifice thou canst offer. Surrender thy will and give thanks to God." At these words her soul was filled with peace, and her anguish gave place not only to patience, but to unconquerable love.

But no pilgrimage to the Green Valley has so great an interest for us as that of Gerard Groote, who came from Deventer to consult the holy Prior, for it was the profound admiration he then conceived for Ruysbroeck, and the life of the Canons of Groenendael, which later on led to the foundation of the famous Monastery of Windesheim, of which the English Convent at Bruges is an offshoot. It is to the devout con- ferences of these two great servants of God that we owe the privilege of being able to call ourselves the spiritual children of Ruysbroeck.

For it was Ruysbroeck's spirit and teaching which moulded that of the School of Windesheim, and its traces are to be found throughout the writings of his children. "Gerard tarried with Ruysbroeck several days," says Thomas à Kempis, "and heard from him many heavenly secrets, so that he exclaimed: 'O excellent father, thy wisdom and thy virtues surpass that which I heard of thee in my own land,' and he declared that his heart was 'welded to that of Ruysbroeck beyond all other men by love and reverence.''

But Ruysbroeck's time was not spent wholly either in writing or in receiving those who came to him for spiritual advice nor even in prolonged contemplation and heavenly colloquies. To his religious brethren he never failed to give an example of regularity and love of humble labour.

He was the first in all monastic observances, and would take on himself the hardest and most menial work. In the garden which the brethren cultivated around the Monastery, he would frequently help the gardeners, carrying manure, digging, and weeding, though the Chronicle confesses that in such employments his good-will surpassed his skill, and the edification he gave was of more value than the work he accomplished; for the lay-brothers found that he would sometimes spare the weeds and root up useful plants, but his simple humility and cheerful alacrity in labour made his presence in their midst the living exemplification of the words he loved to repeat to them: "Be kind, my children, be kind, and you will be saints."

He was faithful even in extreme old age to all the penitential exercises of the cloister, fasting and watching, and joining in the midnight Matins; it was only in his eighty-ninth year that his strength began to fail. The mother whom he had left in his childhood to follow the call of God appeared to him and announced to him their approaching reunion; he should go to Our Lord in the season of Advent, she said. He who had pondered so deeply on the words: "Ecce Sponsus venit," yearned for that coming of the Spouse, and he would frequently utter the words: "I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ!" "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O my God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?"

For so many years he had served God faithfully, and he had so often experienced "the familiar friendship of Jesus" that the thought of possessing Him perfectly filled him with joy.

In his last illness he was carried to the Provost's room, but he begged so earnestly to be allowed to die in the common infirmary that he was removed to it. To the very end his mind remained clear, and as he breathed forth his soul, those who stood around him saw his face all aglow* with the inward joy with which he went to meet his Lord. It was the second of December, 1381.

"So he lived and so he died," says a recent translator of some of his works,† "fulfilling in his own life that perfect and humble following of Christ that he so eagerly urges in the priceless heritage that he has left behind him. . . ." "For him," the same author writes, "mysticism is not a science or a philosophy, exploring by the light of the intellect the secret places of the soul. It is, in the deepest and truest sense, the living of a Life—a Life of continual realization, in which every deed and word and thought is for ever governed and made holy by the Love that rules all. . . . His way is the living of the life of Christ in a constant inward recollection and a continual outward loving and serving."

Ruysbroeck's body was carried to the church by his sorrowing children, and among the night watchers was one who saw him in a vision, mounting the altar steps, vested as if to celebrate Mass, and shining with a beauty so heavenly that no words could describe it. It seems, says Pomerius, that God would thus testify to the singular devotion of His servant to the Holy Sacrifice. He was buried with the simplicity he had ever loved to observe, in the old church, grief for his loss contending with supernatural joy in the hearts of his brethren.‡

Five years later the body was translated to a new chapel, opened at Groenendael by the Bishop of Cambrai, and was found incorrupt and exhaling a sweet odour as of violets. In 1688, at the time of the French invasion during the wars of Louis XIV, the sacred remains, now contained in a rich shrine given by the Archduchess Isabel, were taken in haste for greater safety to Brussels. When peace was declared they were once more restored to the Green Valley, but when the Monastery was suppressed by Joseph II, in 1783, they were again removed and confided to the care of the clergy of St Gudule, where he had so long served as chaplain. Ten years later the soldiery broke into the fine old collegiate church and made it a scene of pillage and profanation. The relics of Blessed John Ruysbroeck were thought to have been irretrievably lost, like so many other sacred treasures, which were no longer to be found when the clergy retook possession of St Gudule.

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* "Sana mente et facie rutilus" (Pomerius).

† *The Book of the XII Béguines*, translated by John Francis. (Watkins: London.)

‡ "Flentes pariter et gaudentes," says Surius.

It was only in 1910 that two large bones were discovered in a garret above the presbytery attached to the church; the seals were still to be seen, and were recognized as those of the Vicar-General of Malines, who had opened the shrine of Ruysbroeck in 1670. Cardinal Mercier added his own seal on February 6, 1911, and by a special favour a part of these precious relics was given to the Canonesses Regular of the English Convent, Bruges, who venerate the holy Prior of Groenendael as their spiritual father.

The "immemorial and public cultus" given to the "Admirable Doctor" was ratified and confirmed by Pius X in 1908, and his feast is appointed to be kept on December 2, the anniversary of his death.

Auger, in his *Mystiques des Pays-Bas*, sums up his appreciation of the spiritual doctrine of Blessed John Ruysbroeck in these words: "His object is never simply to increase knowledge, but to promote sanctity. . . . Among the mystics who preceded him there is none so like the Prior of Groenendael as St Bernard. We find in their lives striking resemblances even in details; there is the same mingling of greatness and humility, the same union of the most sublime mystic contemplation and manual labour, of the most perfect liberty of spirit with entire obedience; the spiritual system of Ruysbroeck, like that of Bernard, places Divine love above all."

His principal works are:

The Kingdom of the Lovers of God.
The Splendour of the Spiritual Espousals.
The Ring or the Brilliant.
Of Four Temptations.
Of the Christian Faith.
The Spiritual Tabernacle.
The Seven Cloisters.
The Mirror of Eternal Life; or, A Treatise on the Blessed Sacrament.
The Seven Degrees of Spiritual Love.
The Book of Supreme Truth.
The Book of the XII Béguines.

Treating of these works Abbot Butler says: "As a descriptive mystic Ruysbroeck stands alongside of St John of the Cross in the daring and eloquence with which

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he ventures to utter in human language the experience of union and knowledge to which he was admitted. If he lacks St John's Latin clarity of thought and expression, he more than makes up for it by a certain massive mysteriousness that may be called Teutonic—he was a Fleming of Brabant—through which we seem ever and anon to catch glimpses of realities, deeply impressive, though at times bewildering. There is a consistency and a sanity through it all, and a restraint due to his sound theological formation, which make an overwhelming impression of truth and reality. It may, with all probability, be said, that than him there has been no greater contemplative; and certainly there has been no greater mystical writer. His contemplation is highly intellectual, and at the same time fully mystical. Whether in the sublimity of his elevations or in the power of recording his experiences, Ruysbroeck stands as one of the very greatest of the mystics " (*Western Mysticism*, pp. 272-273).

II

GERARD GROOTE AND HIS WORK

Blessed John Ruysbroeck died in 1381, while the Western Schism was causing such terrible evils in the Church. St Catherine of Siena had died the preceding year, worn out with sorrow at seeing the failure of her efforts to bring peace to " the sweet Bride of Christ." On her deathbed she had exclaimed: " O Eternal God, accept the sacrifice of my life for the mystical body of Thy Holy Church." Was it the prayer of the dying saint which, in a far distant Northern region, was soon to raise up a body of men who should cause the reformation she so longed for " to be on the lips of all like sweetened honey and to overflow the land," as the old Chronicle of Windesheim expresses it ?

The need of reform was, indeed, generally admitted, and many were ready to complain in no measured terms of the crying abuses which were bringing dishonour on the Church. " But," says Dr. Pastor, in his *History of the Popes*, " those who raised their voices to complain of the corruption and confusion of Christendom were not always men of real piety and moral worth. In many cases they might with advantage have begun by reforming their own lives."

Yet at this period, as at all periods of the history of the Church, men were found who, without making much noise or lamentation, laboured in the right way—that is, in the limits laid down by the Church—for the thorough amendment of all that was amiss. Of this stamp was Gerard Groote, of Deventer. His language was not that of the Schools but of the heart, and, therefore, it reached the heart of his hearers.

Moreover, his life was the practical exemplification of his doctrine. It may be summed up as " the promotion of the imitation of Jesus Christ."

Gerard the Great, " commonly called Groote," was born at Deventer in Holland in 1340. His parents took care that their son, who early showed signs of great ability, should have all the educational advantages befitting one born to an honourable position and considerable wealth. At fifteen he was sent to Paris to attend the Schools. There temptation awaited the boy, as it had awaited another brilliant student a thousand years before at the Schools of Carthage. But though Gerard never went to the lengths to which his African blood and the prevailing pagan morality carried Augustine, yet at Paris, as later on at Cologne, his life was thoroughly worldly, his heart was "engrossed with vanities and follies," while the ample means with which his parents supplied him enabled him to surpass all his companions in his luxurious manner of living and the pursuit of pleasure. He wore "gay and rich apparel, costly furs, and a girdle wrought with silver"; his hair was "delicately tired"; he was fastidious in his tastes; and "delighted in feasting and in varied meats."

Like Augustine, he took a great interest in astrology, and was even accused of dabbling in magic; but he afterwards protested that, though he indeed owned and studied books on the subject, yet he had never dealt in the folly of magical practice. Like Augustine, too, who "sought through the toys of vanity a flashy and reprobate success," Gerard pursued "the shadow of a great reputation, and was chiefly anxious for the praise of men."

At eighteen his remarkable abilities won him the degree of Master of Arts, and he obtained rich benefices—a canonry at Utrecht and one at Aix-la-Chapelle. His talents, his riches, his pleasing manners and great personal beauty made him the centre of a little band of youths, like-minded with himself, who admired and flattered the young cleric, whose life so little accorded with his profession.

But "nearer and nearer, even while he fled from it, came the mighty Hand of God" to rescue him, as it had rescued Augustine.

A certain hermit predicted that he would one day become a great light of the Church, and one who knew of this prophecy asked Gerard why he let himself be held back by trifles and vanities since he was made for high things. But the young man turned a deaf ear to prophecy and admonition, treating them as jests, and pursued his life of pleasure and worldly success. In 1366 he was sent by the town of Utrecht, as its deputy, to the papal court at Avignon. This fact alone shows the esteem in which the talents of the young man were held, for he was then only twenty-six years old.*

A great future in the world seemed to open out before him, but God was pursuing this gifted but wayward soul.

A holy Carthusian Prior, Henry of Kalkar, who had known him from his boyhood, and realized what Gerard might become if once he turned entirely to God, was the chosen instrument of his conversion. Meeting him at Utrecht, whither Gerard had gone, probably on business connected with his canonry, the Prior spoke to him earnestly of that Sovereign Good which he was neglecting in the pursuit of false goods and follies, which could never satisfy such a soul as his.

God blessed his words, and Gerard, like Augustine in his conversion as he had been like him in his wanderings, soon found that "it was sweet to taste no more the sweetness of folly, and that it was a joy to cast away what he had feared to lose."

While Henry of Kalkar "rejoiced exceedingly at this great fish which was caught by the hook of Christ," Gerard proceeded to renounce his benefices, and so changed his life that those who had known him in the days of his worldliness said one to another: "Hath much learning made him mad? Lo, he who delighted in costly meats seeketh poor fare; he doth fly from high place and loveth poverty."

As Augustine, freed from the slavery of the world and his passions, had sought a retreat at Cassiciacum, so Gerard turned all the inborn energy of his lofty and gifted soul from the trifles which had bewitched him and retired to the Charterhouse near Arnhem, of which Henry of Kalkar was Prior.

Under the direction of this holy man he studied the science of the saints, seeking in prayer and fasting to know what service God might require at his hands. Yielding to his friend's advice, he received deacon's Orders, but never consented to accept the dignity of the priesthood, of which in his deep humility he considered himself all unworthy. In like manner had Augustine protested that "many things were wanting to him for the discharge of this duty," remonstrating, entreating, and even weeping when the responsibility of the priesthood was thrust upon him.

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* Thomas à Kempis speaks of his great learning, calling him: "multis doctis doctior," and Petrus Horn says he was "in omnibus scientiis nulli secundus in orbe."

After three years of solitude, during which he shared the austerities of the Carthusians and drank in their spirit, acquiring an intimate knowledge of their rules and manner of life, Gerard went forth into the world once more,* to communicate to others something of that which the Holy Spirit had infused into his soul—a deep conviction of the nothingness of all that does not lead to God and an ardent desire to imitate Jesus Christ, the only Way that leadeth to the Father.

Once more we notice the resemblance between Gerard and the Saint of Hippo. Alike in their early successes in the Schools, their ambition for literary fame, their love of pleasure and their conversion, they had the same power of drawing around them devoted friends, who became their disciples, looking up to them as loved and venerated Masters. Both Augustine and Gerard were born leaders of men.

An account of the work of Gerard shall now be given almost entirely in the words of the old Chronicler, and it will be seen how strikingly he carried out the ideal which had been that of the saintly Bishop, who, at Hippo, lived with his disciples "secundum regulam sub sanctis apostolis constitutam." The "Restorer of the Apostolic Order of Canons Regular"* would have recognized the Brothers of the Common Life as his children, even before they adopted his Rule and became Canons Regular of St Augustine.

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* He would willingly have given himself up entirely to the contemplative life, but Henry of Kalkar saw that he had gifts which should be used in the active service of the Church, then in such sore straits. In his *History of the Schism of the West*, Salembier thus sums up the work which Gerard accomplished: "In Urban's party, a conspicuous place was held by Gerard de Groote, whom Thomas à Kempis declares to be one of the lights of the Church. A fervidly eloquent preacher, he was the Vincent Ferrer of Holland and the North of Germany; as a reformer of the clergy, he is a forerunner of the mission of St Vincent de Paul; as an educator of the young, he gives up his whole life to them like Joseph Calasanzio; as the founder of an Order, he is the father of the *Brothers of the Common Life*, a Congregation which was very popular in our part of the world; he was the St John Baptist de la Salle of the fourteenth century.

"This illustrious servant of God is attached to the most ardent of Urban's supporters, and he writes them an important, but hitherto unpublished, letter (to William de Salvarville) on the question of the Schism. His influence and that of his disciples uphold and defend the Roman party in our northern provinces."

It would be interesting to study the career of Gerard under any of the aspects to which Salembier refers: as Champion of the Vicar of Christ, popular Preacher, Reformer of the clergy or Instructor of youth, but this sketch is concerned with him only as Founder of the Brothers of the Common Life, from among whom the first members of the Congregation of Windesheim were recruited.

For some account of the state of religion in the Low Countries and of the influence exercised by Gerard Groote, the Brothers of the Common Life, and the Congregation of Windesheim, see also *Histoire de Belgique*, by H. Pirenne, vol. ii, chap. iv (Lamertin, rue Coudenberg, Bruxelles).

The following extracts are taken from the Chronicle of Windesheim, written by John Busch, a priest of the Congregation in 1464.

"The world was growing old and set upon the way which leads downwards to hell, when the Providence of God, looking upon it with the eye of fatherly goodness and mercy, saw fit to make ready in the ends of the earth a light that was truly heavenly to lighten the minds of men, and a lamp to show the way to Christ our Lord. . . . This light whereof I speak was the reverend man Gerard the Great, or, in the vulgar tongue, Groote, a deacon in the diocese of Utrecht and one that was in favour both with God and man, being truly illustrious by reason of his life, his learning, and the grace that was in him.

"He had recourse to that reverend father in Christ, Florentius, Bishop of Utrecht, and obtained from him full authority to preach the word of God. Being thus fortified by episcopal authority he continued without ceasing to preach the Holy Gospel and the canonical scriptures in divers churches of the aforesaid diocese, and to expound the same, both publicly and in private; in every place he laid the Gospel before the people, not as gaining his living thereby, but in singleness of heart for Christ's sake only and the salvation of souls, for he served as a soldier at his own charges. . . . All the people came in vast crowds to hear him preaching, so that in the churches and even in the cemeteries there was hardly room to contain them; and Gerard, burning with zeal for the conversion of all, often delivered several discourses in the day to the same congregation; and it is said that he sometimes prolonged the sermons to the second and even to the third hour.

"Thus by his most earnest preaching, holy life, and good conversation, he moved all men, clerks and people, rich and poor, old and young, virgins and widows, to do acts of penance, to despise the world, to fear the last judgement, to love God, to seek and win the

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* Pius V thus calls St Augustine (*In Bullar. Later.*, p. 299).

Beatific Vision and the everlasting companionship of the angels.

"Many therefore, both priests and honourable men and women, in divers places, were pricked to the heart by his preaching, and longed most earnestly with the whole might that was in them, to abandon the world and leave the life thereof, and faithfully to serve God their Master in patience, Faith, Hope, Charity and Love for the things that are eternal.

"Gerard Groote, this reverend Levite of Christ, burning with the zeal of brotherly love, gathered together from every quarter first the books of the Canonical Scriptures and afterwards all the writings of the orthodox Fathers, their sayings, works, and monuments, that were to be found in divers monasteries and colleges; for since these contain the rule for right living and preaching the word of God in Holy Church according to the Catholic Faith, he desired to gain access thereto for himself and for all devout priests and clerks throughout the world.

"Now in those days there was at Deventer a school in which were many scholars, which school was then in the fulness of its vigour, for to it many young men of various ages did resort, coming together in great numbers from all parts of the world, and here they were instructed in the foundations of knowledge in most excellent wise. The venerable Master therefore gathered together certain clerks from this school who had some skill in writing, and he had them copy and finish in worthier form the books of the holy fathers, keeping the cost thereof within bounds, and the charges for all this work were borne by a citizen of Deventer who was very rich, having no small possessions.

"For some while these clerks diligently sought to provide means wherewith to feed and clothe themselves out of the money which was earned in this manner; but after a time the devout Father Florentius Radewyn, a vicar at Deventer, who had been converted by Gerard, made this suggestion to him saying: 'Beloved Master, what doth hinder that I and the clerks whose will is good should put together the gains we earn each week and live together in common?'

"And Gerard made answer: 'A Community? A Community? They of the Orders of Mendicants will by no means suffer this thing, but will strive with all their might to resist it and in every way oppose themselves thereto.'

"Then Florentius replied: 'But what harm if we should begin; perhaps God will grant us good success.'

"Then Gerard after musing in his heart for a while said: 'In the name of the Lord begin, I will be your protector against all who strive to rise up to hinder you in your first essay.'

"Having received this comfortable promise, the devout Father Florentius together with the aforesaid clerks of good will, put together into a common purse the gains of the work of their hands, namely, the sum which each did earn by his writing week by week, and in this manner they made a beginning of the common life in the Name of God, which life they did continue devoutly for no small space of time with great joy of heart and prosperity in temporal things.

"Now the clerks aforesaid held that the Common Life after this sort was the way of perfection and had been instituted in the Primitive Church by the Holy Apostles under the guidance of the Holy Ghost at the time when the multitude of believers in this same Faith of Christ had but one heart and one soul in God, neither did anyone say that aught of the things that he possessed was his own, but all things were in common unto them, neither was there anyone needy among them.

"Likewise in the Gospel it is promised by Christ to them that leave all to follow Him that they shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess Life everlasting. Considering these things and finding besides that by providing a common sustenance they gained quietness of soul and body, they put forth this resolution by common consent, after due deliberation, doing so of their own free will, and by the counsel, aid and favour of Gerard, namely that they agreed and affirmed—though they took no solemn vows in the matter—that henceforward they would live this common life perpetually for all the days of their life, under true obedience to Florentius, industriously procuring food, raiment, and other necessaries of the body by the common labour of their hands, especially by writing; and they all resolved, being divinely inspired thereunto by devotion to God and love for their neighbour, to be more kindly affectionate one to the other, and zealous in drawing other men with them, not clerks only, but lay-folk of good will whatever their condition, and in leading them by their words and holy example to love God and despise the world.

"So this devout Father Florentius and the priests and clerks who dwelt together in the common life, laid down a few wholesome rules by the advice of Gerard, prescribing the form and manner in which the community should live, the place and time for labour, watching, sleeping, prayer, reading, the refreshment of the body, and ministering to the salvation of others: which rules were most convenient for men in their condition. By their discerning faith they set forth the manner of the apostolic life, and a pattern of that perfect way which, being taught by the Gospel, is worthy of all imitation, to all religious throughout the world, as also to the men and women who dwell therein, so that all who saw them praised the holiness of their lives and were astonished. The rule of devout exercises for them that lived the common life, was agreeable to their manner of living, which was apostolic; it was possible for them, for they also were instant to get their own living and provide for their necessities by the labour of their hands, spinning, sewing, weaving and the like.

"Thus they were patterns of deep humility, mortification of self, inward devotion, and true holiness to all devout women throughout the world.

"In the midst of labour they did never cease from fervency of spirit nor from exercises of devotion, but as they performed their common tasks they would recite devoutly the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, the Litanies of the Holy Spirit and the Eternal Wisdom, the Seven Psalms, Vigils and such like devotions, in their mother-tongue, using the translation made by Gerard Groote, and they would pray devoutly in this fashion without needless talking, which custom they have continued to this present day. In divers cities, towns, and country districts many priests, clerks, virgins, widows, men and women alike, did most gladly leave all they had in this world, parents, brethren, kinsfolk and friends, riches, profits and possessions, for the love of their heavenly country, for they desired with all their hearts to follow in the steps of the Brothers and Sisters of the Devout Congregation in Deventer, serving continually in true Obedience, Chastity and Poverty our Lord Jesus Christ, who for them became poor.

"At that time certain disciples of Gerard, good men and filled with the spirit of God, eagerly busied themselves to build in divers places many habitations for the servants and handmaids of the Lord; and there are now many congregations of priests, clerks and Devout Sisters, serving God faithfully after the manner of the primitive fathers, but adopting no formal rule, and yet living in true obedience, humility, simplicity, poverty, and continence under the Rule of Christ.

"The Brothers and Sisters of these devout Congregations, who seek day and night to please God their Maker, living in humility and by the labour of their hands, are assuredly in a state of salvation, since they follow the apostolic life after the institutions of the primitive Church, albeit without any solemn profession first made; and doubtless they shall possess the life of blessedness with all the saints for ever, as I have often heard our first Fathers say, and prove likewise by the testimony of sure writings."

As Gerard had foreseen, great opposition wa made by the mendicant Orders to what became known as the "Modern Devotion," but the venerable Master, who was very learned in the Holy Scriptures and law both canon and civil, went up into the pulpit and showed that those men who attacked the humble servants of Christ were not preaching sound doctrine. By the authority of the Gospels and apostolic writings he proved that this manner of life and conversation had been practised and approved from the beginning of Christianity to the present day, being in accordance with the teaching of the Gospels and the Apostles. "His words and the support he obtained from episcopal authority at length silenced his adversaries, and no one any more durst speak openly against the holy life and conversation of the clerks, priests, and sisters of the Congregation of the New Devotion."

About three years before his death Gerard sought the supreme consolation of an interview with the holy solitary of the Green Valley, Blessed John Ruysbroeck. It is Thomas à Kempis who is the fit Chronicler of this meeting of two souls so well formed to love and understand one another.

Gerard set out with one named John Cele, of whom we are told that he was "a devout and faithful lover of Jesus Christ. Their hearts and minds were as one in the Lord, and the fellowship of each was pleasant to the other." They took with them a guide who also bore the name of Gerard. They came, therefore, into the parts about Brabant, and when they reached the Monastery of Groenendael in the forest of Soignes, the holy Prior recognized Gerard, as saints recognize saints, as

Francis and Dominic had recognized one another as joint labourers in the Lord's vineyard.

Gerard abode with Ruysbroeck for several days, conversing with him of the things of God. It was what he saw during this visit that gave him so high an esteem for the Rule of St Augustine, as practised by the Canons Regular, that on his deathbed he was to recommend it to his disciples in preference to all others.

Gerard returned to his own country "with still greater love and fuller zeal, as it were a purified creature," pondering in his heart what he had heard from "the Admirable Doctor." The link formed between them was strong, and God Himself revealed to Gerard the time of his holy friend's death, and that he had passed but one hour in the purifying flames before entering into the fruition of the Beatific Vision for which he had so yearned.

To one of his disciples Gerard spoke words which recall the conversation between St Augustine and his mother at Ostia, when after ardent longings for "the Fountain of Life . . . the region where life is Wisdom," they "touched it for an instant with the whole force of their hearts," and Monica exclaimed: "Why I still linger here I know not; the hope of this world is dead within me. What do I here?" So Gerard, inflamed with a mighty longing for Eternal Life, exclaimed: "What further can I do here? Would that I were with my Lord in Heaven." He who had ever preached charity was to die a martyr to charity, for it was in visiting one stricken by the plague, which in 1384 raged in Deventer, that he contracted the fatal malady. The story of his passing is beautifully told in the old Chronicle.

After the visit, during which he felt he had drawn in the deadly poison of the plague, he returned to his own house, called Florentius, with the other priests and brothers of the Congregation of Deventer, and told them "that the time of his dissolution was at hand, that he should die on the next day, for he knew surely he could not strive against the deadly poison that did so mightily assail him."

"But when they saw and heard this they were full of sorrow and their hearts were wounded, so with tears and sobs and groanings they began to ask Gerard saying: 'Most beloved Master, our father and ever faithful defender, what shall we do hereafter, and whither shall we flee when thou art gone? The Devotion which hath begun to flourish again through all our land, and hath taken new life beneath the wings of thy protection, shall likewise perish when thou shalt die. . . . Must this great company of devout persons perish by reason of the sudden loss of their Father and patron? Most honoured Father, and counsellor most excellent, what precepts canst thou give us in our great need?'

"But Gerard comforted them saying: 'My most beloved brethren, fear not, neither let your hearts be afraid. . . . God shall not suffer to perish this excellent work, little though it may be; nay, He shall make it grow and increase that it bear most abundant fruit in Holy Church. I shall be a better help to you there than here, for I will shed roses out of Heaven into your bosom.'"

He then told them that some of them should join an Order approved by the Church "that to them all the devout may resort in all their necessities, and receive counsel, aid and defence."

The fervour of the brethren and their readiness for austerities is shown by their offer to join the strictest Order in the Church, for they first asked their dying Father if he would have them adopt the Rule of the Carthusians, for they had heard "it was almost the only one in those regions that had been reformed";* but Gerard, much as he loved and revered the sons of St Bruno, answered no, for he would have his children "not so separated from mankind as no longer to be able freely to help all who should come to them."

Then they asked if they should join the Cistercians, "whose Order is more strict than any other except the Carthusians," but again Gerard answered: "Nay, not that Order either, for," he said, "their Rule is more austere than may be borne by all in these times of ours"; and then he proceeded to tell them of the idea which had taken possession of his soul when he had witnessed the angelic life of Ruysbroeck and his companions in the Green Valley. He would have them follow the Rule of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, "for it doth not differ greatly from your devout manner of life." He bade them take Florentius, "my beloved disciple in whom the Holy Spirit hath found a resting-place, as the father and ruler whom they must henceforth love, hear, and obey."

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* ". . . Interrogabant an ordinem Carthusiensium, quem solum paene in his partibus reformatum audierant, assumere deberent." The Carthusian Order has never needed reform. The Brothers may have thought that the appearance of the "Statuta Nova" in 1368, which comprised the ordinances of the General Chapters since 1127, implied a "reform."

Once more he enjoined on them " to love one another, and everywhere keep whole their Charity for all, . . . so should the Lord be with them."

Thus did he give kindly comfort to his sorrowing disciples and provide for their future. When he had first felt assured of his approaching death, he had exclaimed: " Lo, Augustine and Bernard are knocking at the door," and as the feast of St Bernard was drawing towards evening, Gerard saw these his two glorious Patrons enter in at the door of his house and await the going forth of his soul from his body. Just as the sun was sinking he delivered up to God his happy soul, " fortified by the Sacraments of the Church, made precious by faith, having good store of merits and adorned with virtues, a soul meet to be crowned for ever in the glory of Eternity with the saints and elect of God." It was August 20 of the year 1384, and he was in the forty-fourth year of his age. He was buried in the Church of St Mary at Deventer, in which he had so often preached the word of God.

The work of Gerard the Great did not die with him, for his disciples carried out his wish that they should adopt the Rule of the Canons Regular, and the Monastery of Windesheim, whose Constitutions we still follow, was founded in 1387. Of it Dr. Pastor says: " This foundation deserves to be particularly mentioned even in the History of the Popes, for monastic reform and the revival of faith flowed thence like a mighty stream, first through Holland, and then through the whole of Northern Germany, the Rhine Country, and Franconia. It was established as a Congregation in 1395, and its statutes were immediately confirmed by Boniface IX. . . . The rapid increase of this Congregation, from the year 1386 when the first six Brothers took possession of mud huts at Windesheim, and the wonderful renovation of monastic life which it initiated, form one of the brightest spots in an age so full of sorrow."

The stream has not run dry, and it has come to pass that in the present day that still remains true which was written of Gerard the Great six centuries ago, for now as then " through his labours there are many virgins set as flowers in the field of the Lord; lives of voluntary poverty are the harvest therein; renunciations of the world and many other fruits are sprung from the seed of the doctrine he preached, and these things are seen and known of them that truly love God."

III

THE FOUNDATION OF WINDESHEIM

Its Constitutions and Spirit

On the death of Gerard the Great, his disciples remained closely united round Florentius Radewyn, whom the Master had designated to hold his place in their regard. They were fully resolved to adopt the Rule of St Augustine as he had enjoined, and their first care was to seek for a spot on which to build a Monastery. After having, as the Chronicle* quaintly expresses it, "gone about the earth and walked up and down it," they found a place suitable for their purpose at Windesheim, between Deventer and Zwolle, and they obtained the necessary authorization from the Bishop of Utrecht.

Six of the brethren, among whom was John à Kempis, elder brother of the author of the *Imitation*, proceeded to this piece of wild land set about with many willow-trees. They began by putting up "huts and little cots, wattled with clay and osiers and roofed with straw" in which to dwell while they were building the Monastery. This they erected on the higher ground in the centre of this desert tract, for greater security against the inundations of the river Yssel.

The love of the old Chronicler for the house of his profession now breaks out into enthusiasm. "The Lord," he says, "made His purpose evident beforehand by divers marvels, which foretold what must surely come to pass, namely, that this should be a place of prayer and calling on His Name, a place of refuge, peace, and rest from toil to many that were heavy laden with the burden of their sins; a place to which they that desired to escape shipwreck amid the troubled seas of this treacherous world might steer their souls and find a haven of eternal safety. . . . Here should men strive to rid themselves of the filthiness of sin . . . washing white the raiment of their souls in the Blood of the Lamb. . . . Here the souls of saints should willingly bear for Christ's sake bodily labour, the bruising of the flesh, spiritual exercises and trouble of mind, being thereby polished as iron by the file and tried as gold in fire. . . . So should they rid them of every spot and wrinkle, and be made ready for Christ the Heavenly Spouse, to reign with Him for ever in the glory of Eternal beauty.

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* "Chronicon Canonicorum Regularium Ordinis S. Augustini Capituli Windesemensis. Auctore Ioanne Buschio Can. Reg. (Antverpiae apud Petrum et Joannem Belleros. Anno M.DC.XXI." This work is always meant when "the Chronicle" is referred to. A translation made by the late John Arthur Pott and kindly presented by him to the Canonesses of the English Convent, Bruges, has been freely used.

"Now the cenobites of all Religious Orders, while they are exiles and sojourners in this world, do serve God their Maker faithfully, night and day. They are never weary in the ministry of praise, lauding Him in His temple at the appointed hours, and their hearts are eager to do Him service. These things they do that may be held worthy to gain a place in Jerusalem, their country in Heaven, to look face to face upon God the King in all His beauty . . . for eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.

"Long before the Monastery was built, sure signs and revelations did show and prove that upon the mount at Windesheim there should abide continually the Presence of God, companies of angels and assemblages of saints of angelic lives; for on that very spot where the choir of the Church and the cloister of Windesheim are now set, many of the country folk, both men and women, did often see angelic visions of men clad in white raiment and did hear them sing praises to God as they formed processions and performed in wondrous wise the rites and services of praise that are used by the Church militant of God."*

The funds of the building of Windesheim were supplied partly by some of the brethren who came of wealthy families, and partly by the many friends of Gerard the Great. But though the offerings were generous, the

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* This beautiful story of the apparition of men in white garments, who sometimes bore lights and sounded upon bells or clashed cymbals while they walked in procession singing the praises of God, is told of several places in which Monasteries of Canons Regular were to arise.

Shepherds and simple countryfolk beheld the like at the Fount of the Blessed Virgin, near Arnhem, at Mount St Agnes (the house in which Thomas à Kempis was professed), and at the Monastery of Nazareth in Westphalia.

Monastery was built in accordance with the words which still remain in our Constitutions: " The manner of building the Monasteries of this Religious Order shall not be stately, but modest and with simplicity showing forth humility " (" Modus aedificanda Monasteria religionis hujus curiosus non erit, sed mediocriter simplex, et humilitatem prae se ferens ").

The work of the building was pursued with so much zeal that before the year was out part of the Monastery was fit for habitation, and the church was ready to be consecrated.

Florentius ever kept in mind the desire of his beloved Master Gerard, that among his disciples no other spirit should prevail than that which he had so greatly admired in the Green Valley. Six of the brethren were, therefore, sent to Eemstein,* there to drink in the spirit and study the customs of the Order, to which they were about to be professed. Eemstein was a house founded the year after Blessed John Ruysbroeck's death, and a Canon from Groenendael, Godfrey of Louvain, had been sent to form the spirit of the new Community, and to teach them all the observances which they in their turn were now to transmit to the brethren of Windesheim and which have been handed down faithfully even to our days.

The Canons of Eemstein received their brethren with hands outstretched and fulness of charity. Moreover, just as they themselves had learned from the Fathers of Groenendael to whom they owed their origin, so did they now show all things clearly to others; wherefore our brothers, being kindled with the zeal of divine love, and knowing how to draw forth great things from small, did set themselves to omit no tittle of the observance of the Rule at any time, and being enlightened by divine grace, they strove, with all prudence, to learn divers things that should be profitable to many. What the spirit of these our first fathers was may be best told in the simple words of Thomas à Kempis, who thus describes the brethren with whom he himself lived when he first put himself under the direction of Florentius: " Humility, the first of all virtues, was here practised from the least to the greatest.

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* Eemstein afterwards joined the Congregation of Windesheim. Other Monasteries which were very early incorporated with its Chapter were those of Seven Fountains (Septem Fontes, Sevenborren, Sept Fontaines), the Red Valley or Red Cloister (Rubea Vallis, Rooval, Rouge Cloître), both in the forest of Soignes, and that of Corsendonck, near Turnhout. To these were added that of Groenendael itself and the Monastery of Bethlehem, near Louvain.

" This makes the earthly house a Paradise, and transforms mortal men into heavenly pearls, living stones in the Temple of God. There, under holy discipline, flourished obedience, the mother of virtues and the lamp of spiritual knowledge. The highest wisdom consisted in obeying without delay, and it was a grave fault to disregard the counsel or even the slightest word of the Superior. The love of God and of men burned within and without, so that the hard hearts of sinners melted into tears when they heard their holy words; those who came cold went away inflamed by the fire of the discourse and full of joy, and resolved for the future to sin no more. . . . There was a shining store of armour for the spiritual warfare against each separate vice; old and young alike learned to fight bravely against Satan, the flesh and the deceits of the world. The memory of the ancient Fathers and the fervour of the Egyptian solitaries, which had long lain half buried, was brought to life again, and the religious state rose, in conformity with the traditions of the primitive Church, to the highest perfection. There were heard pious exhortations to the practice of virtue, and the most holy and sorrowful Passion of Our Saviour Jesus Christ was the subject of frequent and devout meditation. We know that from the attentive remembrance of His Passion comes healing for our souls; it has power to kill the poisonous bite of the serpent, to moderate the passions of the heart, and to raise the dull soul from earth to Heaven by the imitation of the Crucified."*

It was on October 17, 1387, that the six chosen brethren were clad in the white woollen cassock and the linen rochet which is the distinctive mark of the Canonical Order.†

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* Somalius, Opp. Thomas à Kempis, Antwerpiae, 1615.

† In the annals of Santa Maria in Portu, at Ravenna, it is recorded how Pope Paul III, who loved to visit the Canons, and would encourage the young professed to talk freely with him, once surprised and perhaps alarmed the white-robed Canons around him by suddenly asking them: " Can you tell me by what authority you wear a linen rochet and a white cassock like that which we wear? And an amice and biretta which, though not of the same colour as Ours, are yet of exactly the same form? Who, think ye, designed this habit? Were the Popes or the Canons Regular the first to wear it?" " Holy Father," answered one of the Canons respectfully, " Your Holiness holds the place of Him from Whom is derived all that we have.

Florentius, Bishop of Utrecht, had sent as his representative his suffragan Hubert, who, by a happy coincidence, was titular Bishop of Hippo, and it was he who received this first Profession. The three vows of Religion were pronounced in this formula: " I, Brother N., promise, with the help of God, perpetual Continency, entire Poverty and Obedience to the Superior who shall be canonically elected and to his successors, according to the Rule of St Augustine, and the prescriptions of this Convent, which the Chapter shall determine."

These prescriptions were now drawn up and form the Constitutions we still follow. Six Canons were appointed for this most important work, which was based chiefly on the " Liber Ordinis " of the Abbey of St Victor, of which the Abbot had visited Groenendael in order to determine Blessed John Ruysbroeck and his companions to adopt the Rule of St Augustine. The "Liber Ordinis" had been compiled by Gilduin, first Abbot of St Victor's in 1113; he had received the true traditions of the Canonical Order from a disciple of St Yvo of Chartres, who restored the Canonical life in the Monastery of St Quentin at Beauvais about the year 1080. Thus we see how great is the antiquity of many of our observances.

But the Canons of Windesheim did not confine themselves to the " Liber Ordinis "; with great liberty of spirit they borrowed from other Orders any point which appeared to them conducive to the attainment of perfection. Thus, as we should expect from the disciples of one who had lived three years in a Charterhouse, they adopted some of the Carthusian customs and they also borrowed from the Cistercian Rule; these were the two Orders they had offered to join as being the " most strict and fervent in the Church," and Gerard the Great's special devotion to St Bernard will also be remembered. The Constitutions were approved by Boniface IX in 1395.

Later on the Chapter of Windesheim was empowered by apostolic authority to make such alterations in the

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All that is ours is yours. Our habit, our manner of life, our name we owe to the Holy See." " Not so," said the Pope, " Do you imagine that if this had not been the dress of the first clerics any of our predecessors would have granted you the favour of being clothed like the Sovereign Pontiff ? Know then that if We allow you to wear this habit, it is because We hold for certain that you are the direct successors and true representatives of these first clerics " (Dom Eugène Bourguignon: *Le Bx. Jean Ruysbroeck*).

Constitutions as the times required. The last edition was printed in 1636; it differed from those that had preceded it, chiefly in appointing the early hours of the morning for the Office of Matins instead of midnight as heretofore.*

Pope Martin V renewed the approbation of these Constitutions in 1420, and in 1486 Innocent VIII extended to the Windesheim Congregation the privileges conceded to the Lateran Canons, but it was not till 1629 that it became known as the Lateran-Windesheim Congregation.†

The Constitutions of Windesheim were drawn up in the full fervour of the great religious revival which, begun by the preaching of Gerard Groote, seems to have been the providential means ordained by God for the preservation of the Catholic faith in Belgium, South Holland, and the Rhine Provinces. This influence spread far and wide, affecting many who never came into personal contact with the brethren of Windesheim, whose power for good proceeded less from their exterior action than from the holiness of their interior life, that close union with God of which Blessed John Ruysbroeck had given the example. Their aim was to be "hidden with Christ in God," expressed in the truly Augustinian motto: "Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari," "Love to be unknown and reputed as nothing." "The characteristics of their spirituality," says Sir Francis Cruise, "essentially include absolute and grand simplicity . . . and culminate in the inculcation of the pure love of God, charity towards others, purity and humility of heart, elevation of the soul, contempt of the world, renunciation of self, and the faithful imitation of our Divine Lord and Master, Jesus Christ."

The observance of the Constitutions, now drawn up, ensured the continuance of the spirit which has been handed down as a sacred deposit. Now, as five centuries ago, the Novices of the Order are put to the test, "whether they desire truly to die to the world and to themselves and to live to God in the perfection of Holy Religion."

What moves them to desire admission to the Order is to be proved " by the exercise of labour and humiliation, by prompt obedience, by mortification of their own will and judgement, by observance of stillness and silence, by alacrity in watchings and abstinence," and during their noviceship they must learn the " true love of humility and poverty and embrace willingly all humble and mean employments." They are to be " instant in holy reading and prayer and to come to all the observances of the Divine Office both day and night with all alacrity and fervour of spirit." And when their vows are made they must know that "from henceforward they are wholly separated from the things of this world and must order their lives with true humility, obedience, and perfect abnegation of themselves."

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* This change was adopted at Bruges in 1642, when the Constitutions were examined by "ye chiefe men of ye Order," who declared them to be in all things conformable to those of Windesheim.

† The Canons Regular now established in England (at Eltham, Eton, Bodmin, the last-named being the first house founded since the "Reformation") as well as those in Belgium (Liège, Namur) belong to the Lateran Congregation.

Such are the ideals put before those who would follow the Constitutions of Windesheim, which, during five centuries "have produced abounding fruits of sanctity " (Mgr. Faict, Bishop of Bruges, 1877). Such was the teaching of the school in which Thomas à Kempis was trained. Indeed, it seems probable that the *Imitation of Christ* was less an original composition than the expression of the spirit—the maxims of the accumulated wisdom of the Congregation of Windesheim, collected by one who, in all his writings, shows the deepest veneration for " our first fathers," especially for his Master Florentius, of whose notable sayings he is known to have made a collection. Among them are many redolent of the spirit of Windesheim and of the *Imitation:* " No man can attain true humility unless he is willing to be despised by others and regarded as of no account; it were better to be trodden under foot than to consent to the praise of men." " It is better to follow the direction of another than thine own." " Much study is of little profit unless it be directed to amendment of life." " If any would make good progress, let him study to do violence to himself." " He that desireth to make progress in humility, must often set before himself hard and menial tasks."

But enough has been said to give some idea of the spirit of the Congregation, and we return to the old Chronicle which tells us of the joy of that memorable first Profession day in October, 1387.

" The devout fathers [*i.e.*, the Brothers of the Common Life] who were then present at Windesheim, had now an opportunity to go aside in quietness apart from the throng of guests, and together with these first

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brothers, clad in their new white garments, they spent in pleasant wise a day most joyous and full of spiritual gladness . . . and they were kindled inwardly unto wonder at the divine goodness, so as to cry aloud in the joy of their hearts: 'For the Lord is good, for His mercy endureth for ever,' and they gave utterance to like golden and burning words of love. They knew now, by sure experience, that they had received into their bosom the roses promised to them by Master Gerard of holy memory, and that if they waited in faithful devotion they should receive yet more abundant flowers, which should be sent in time to come . . . so having full confidence Godward, they began earnestly to consider the means by which from henceforth our Brothers might live the religious, regular, and exemplary life."

The Chronicler does not end his account of the Dedication of the Church and Monastery without indulging in one of those quaint conclusions drawn from the meaning of names which were the delight of writers in the fourteenth century; often these are fanciful and far-fetched; but in the present case the thought is apt and graceful: "These things were done under the rule of Florentius, Bishop of Utrecht, on the day of St Florentius the Bishop, and it was Florentius Radewyn who procured the same to be done: and the name of these, which meaneth 'the blossoming,' did fitly signify that there shall be nothing in Windesheim that does not spring up and blossom unto life eternal, for they that are not predestined to Eternal Life may not abide continually in this Monastery."

IV

SIDELIGHTS ON CHURCH HISTORY

Very interesting are the records of the succeeding years at Windesheim. The growth of the Congregation, founded on humility and simplicity, was rapid. By the year 1407 Windesheim was at the head of a union of twelve Monasteries. The houses in Brabant, belonging to the Groenendael Congregation, joined it, and towards the end of the fifteenth century it numbered eighty-six houses of Canons and sixteen of Canonesses.

The Canons did a great work of reformation. John Busch of Windesheim (1399-1480) reformed, or had a share in reforming, forty-three Monasteries, of which twenty-seven were Augustinian, eight Benedictine, five Cistercian, and three Premonstratensian.

The forty-first chapter of the Chronicle treats of the Council of Constance, and tells of the reception accorded to the Priors of the Monasteries of Windesheim and Bethlehem and the Rector of the Devout Clerks of Münster, who attended it.

We can better understand the admiration excited by their poverty and humility if we call to mind the magnificence displayed by many of the prelates. Thus we read that the Archbishop of Mayence made his entry into the town with an escort 500 strong, while Cardinals (of whom twenty-nine were present) were attended by retinues of fifty, sixty, or eighty persons. A hundred thousand men and thirty thousand horses had to be fed daily; brilliant tournaments were held in which the nobles and knights of Germany and Switzerland contended in presence of the Emperor Sigismund.* Some explanation may be needed as to the title of "Oecumenical," which is given by the Chronicler to the Council. It had been convened owing to the persevering efforts of Sigismund, King of the Romans, the official protector of Holy Church, and the early sessions were held under the presidency of John XXIII (Baltassar Cossa) but when it became clear that all three claimants to the Papacy would be required to resign, he fled from the city. The Council, now without a head, passed some articles which may be considered as "panic legislation," declaring against all the traditions of the Church that the Council was above the Pope. These decrees were never approved by pontifical authority, were equivalently rejected by Martin V, and explicitly so later on. John XXIII was deposed by the Council in the twelfth session (May, 1415), and he himself, now in confinement under the supervision of Sigismund, ratified the sentence. Gregory XII (Angelo Corrario, the legitimate Pope), abdicated in 1417, but before doing so he formally reconvoked the Council, and Church historians have considered it as only *Oecumenical* from that time. But we will now give the account of the Council as narrated in the Chronicle. The chapter is entitled:

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* See Salembier's *Great Schism of the West.*

"Concerning that great Council of Constance, whereat was ended the Schism which had endured forty years (1378-1418), and how the Prior of Windesheim, being called thither, obtained favour in the sight of the Prelates."

"In the year of the Lord 1414, a great Council was begun in the city of Constance by Sigismund, King of the Romans, Hungary, and Bohemia, which Council continued until the fourth year, for all things were considered at great length and with full freedom, and safe-conduct was given to all that came thither. Five nations in the world were represented, namely Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and England, and there were present also ambassadors solemnly appointed by kings, princes, and prelates of all Christendom, save when such princes and prelates were there in person; Greeks also and Turks, and Superiors of all the Religious Orders, these latter exceeding fifty, were there.* Here John Huss† and

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* Eighteen thousand ecclesiastics attended the Council.

† John Huss, born in a village of Bohemia in 1396, became a Professor in the University of Prague, into which Wickliffe's writings were surreptitiously introduced. Jerome of Prague was his most ardent friend and disciple. The tenets taught by Huss were undoubtedly subversive not only of the Faith, but also of all temporal authority. According to his teaching an ecclesiastical or civil Ruler has no power or jurisdiction while in a state of mortal sin, and is bound to resign in such a case. The Council after condemning these and other heretical doctrines held by Huss, handed him over to the secular arm, with the request customary on such occasions, that his punishment should be perpetual imprisonment and that his life should be spared. But Huss had excited the people to rebellion

Jerome, who were heresiarchs, were burned with fire, and those Bohemians who cleave to their heresy and follow their sect were declared to be heretics.

"Here also Pope John XXIII was deposed, and Gregory XII, who resigned the Papal throne,* was appointed chief Cardinal, and thus that great and most evil Schism, which had endured continuously for forty years, the like of which we have never read of in the Church of God, was composed and brought to an end; and Pope Martin V,† being appointed by the hearty agreement of all the Cardinals gathered together in the Council, duly approved of all the decrees of the same. The year of his election and of the end of the Council is set forth in this verse of the psalm by means of the letters which denote number: *LaUs eJUs In eCCLesIa sanCtorum*, for this was in the year 1418.

"Pope Martin V granted the grace of the Jubilee once in life and once in death to all who took part in the Council

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giving any subject leave to take the life of a tyrant, and it was not likely that mercy would be shown in his case. He suffered the terrible penalty of burning with courage worthy of a better cause on July 6, 1415. The question of the safe-conduct granted him by Sigismund was discussed by Father Thurston, S.J., in the *Month*, May, 1924, pp. 449-452. Jerome of Prague underwent his sentence in the following May. These executions were followed by what are called the Hussite Wars. The sect known as the Moravian Brethren still hold the doctrines of John Huss, who anticipated much of Luther's teaching.

* Benedict XIII (Pedro di Luna) stubbornly refused to resign his claims to the Papacy, though the King of the Romans went in person to urge him to act as the saintly Gregory XII had done. He was therefore deposed and retired to the rocky isle of Peniscola, off the coast of Spain, and there maintained his pretensions until his death a few years later.

† Cardinal Otto Colonna, who was elected on November 11, 1417. His life and character made him worthy of the choice; as he was not yet ordained priest he was raised to that dignity on the 13th, and on the day following was consecrated bishop; his coronation as Sovereign Pontiff took place on the feast of the Presentation (November 21). The Council was dissolved in April, 1418, and Martin V left Constance on Whit-Monday of that year (May 16). He only entered the Eternal City on September 14, 1421, having remained eighteen months at Florence (February, 1419–September, 1420). It was from thence that is dated the Bull *Ineffabilis Summi Providentia Patris*, by which on July 8, 1420, he erected the Convent of St Ursula's at Louvain, which was to be the Mother-House of the English foundation in the same town. He showed on several occasions the esteem he had conceived for the Congregation of Windesheim, whose Fathers he had met at the Council of Constance, and renewed the approbation of their Constitutions.

on condition that they fasted for one day in the week throughout the year. Likewise he ordained, as did also the Council, that no one need be shunned at Divine Service unless especially excommunicated by name. . . ."

We must here interrupt the narrative of the Chronicler in order to explain more briefly than he does the cause which brought the Windesheim Fathers to Constance.

As had been foreseen by Gerard Groote, the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life had been attacked by members of the recognized Religious Orders, who even accused the Sisters established at Cologne of heresy, " but the great ones of the city took the word very ill, saying that such a thing was never heard, namely, that heretics should dwell in the fair city of Cologne " (Chron. of Mount St Agnes, translated by J. P. Arthur). Foremost among their opponents was a Dominican Friar, Matthew Grabow, who declared that " no persons who had not made Profession in a Religious Order approved by the Church can keep the three vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience without mortal sin, and divers like things also he said that savour of heresy."

He was cited before the Bishop of Utrecht, but being condemned by him, he appealed to the Apostolic See. Hence the attendance of the Fathers of Windesheim at the Council of Constance, to which the Bishop, Frederick of Blankenheim, referred the case, testifying in a letter to the Fathers of the Council that he found nothing contrary to Church doctrine in the Congregations of the Devout, but that " all and each of them led the true apostolic life of the Primitive Church." The matter was examined by the Council, and Friar Matthew was sent to prison and told that unless he should condemn his book " he might not come forth save to the stake. But the Friar was afraid for his own skin (*qui pelli sue pertimescens*), and, adopting more wholesome counsels, recognized his fault and openly made confession . . . and thus scaping the stake and death went away in peace." The Chancellor Gerson was one of those who defended the Brothers in the Council.*

The Chronicle tells us how the Fathers of Windesheim "were received in glorious wise by the Cardinals and other great ones of the Council, and first of all the Prior of Bethlehem (at Zwolle), a man who was eloquent and of great stature, delivered a notable speech before the said Cardinals, setting forth the purpose of their journey.

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* *Chron. Wind.*, cap. lviii.

Then the Prior of Windesheim (John Vos of Heusden) expounded in a few words his own cause and desires and those of his general Chapter, delivering an effectual, learned, and clear discourse which showed his lowly and notable modesty before the Pontiffs and Prelates of the Universal Church.

"But when they saw these men and diligently considered their calm bearing, the Cardinals being kindled with love for them, made answer forthwith: 'These are the Religious Fathers whom we have long desired to see and hear.' For John the Prior of Windesheim did always and everywhere display a bearing like that of St Bernard of Clairvaux, and by his words, which were few, modest, and prudent, he obtained (not unworthily) a good and attentive hearing, and the effectual granting of his petition.

"So the said Cardinals perceived by the words and bearing of these men that the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelt in them: wherefore they held them in great reverence, and several times sent them back to their lodgings with burning tapers, torches, and lights, and attended by many servants.

"From that time forth to the present day our Reverend General Chapter, being very well known to the Roman Curia, hath deservedly borne a laudable name and a glorious reputation before our Apostolic Lord and the Cardinals of the Curia, so that whatever favours they have seen fit to ask for the promotion of the Religious Life, or the cause of due reformation, have not lightly been denied. Pope Martin V ratified and approved almost all the privileges granted by Roman Pontiffs to our Chapter before his days, as also those given by Legates of the Apostolic See and by the Ordinaries of the places. Also of his benignity he granted us many things that were profitable to our Order and Chapter, or necessary to it, and these are set forth in his Bull with the leaden seal, which is entitled *Sponsa Christi*. Likewise he expressed therein more fully each separate point, reciting and diligently rehearsing all the previous grants word by word. Of this Bull each one of our Monasteries now hath a copy in its register and inventory.

"So also did Pope Eugenius IV* and others that were Legates sent forth by the Apostolic See. . . .

"When the Prior of Windesheim returned from the Council of Constance, he was received with great joy by all his brothers, and in token of this joy and his happy return all the members of our Community supped with him in the Infirmary. Then did we hear with what charity, benevolence, and grace he had been received by all the Prelates of the Church in Constance, and how Sigismund the Emperor had delivered in the hearing of all a Latin discourse concerning the need to preserve the unity of the Church for ever, and how he first protested that if he should commit any barbarism or solecism he should not be charged therewith, since he was not accustomed to use Latin words; and how, in spite of this, he discoursed in a most learned manner, and readily enough on the subject which he desired, and that before the Universal Church of God, which was gathered together in the Holy Ghost. The Prior also told us how eagerly and gladly he and the other devout Fathers, when they were in the city of Constance, had visited the cell of that devout Brother of the Order of Preachers, who by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost compiled the book entitled: *The Timepiece of Eternal Wisdom.* And many like things he recounted to us which it were a long task to set forth separately.

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* He succeeded Martin V in 1431.

"These matters concerning the Council of Constance, that were greatly approved by the Apostolic See and all the Prelates of the Church of the whole of Christendom, I have inserted here because of the presence of the Prior of Windesheim, for I know that he attended the Council because it was demanded of him, as also all the chief Prelates of the Church were constrained to be present."

The Chronicler was no doubt right in keeping within the limits of the work with which he was charged, the writing of the Annals of his Monastery, but we cannot help wishing he had told us something more of those "many things" which Prior John related to his brethren, as they sat over their supper in the Infirmary of Windesheim 500 years ago. It would have been interesting, for instance, to have heard something of the way in which the news of the Battle of Agincourt was received by the English and French present at the Council of Constance. Pierre Cauchon, the future Bishop of Beauvais, who a few years later was to play such an odious part in the trial of St Joan of Arc, had been one of the French legation, as also the celebrated Jean Gerson, who was to be put forward after his death as a candidate for the honour of the authorship of the work which is the chief glory of the school of Windesheim: the *Imitation of Christ.*

It is pleasant to read of the veneration in which the disciples of Ruysbroeck held the memory of Blessed Henry Suso. These two great mystics were contemporaries. Suso was born in the year 1300 of a noble family, whose residence was on the shores of Lake Constance. He entered the Order of St Dominic while still very young, and was distinguished for his wonderful spirit of penance and his tender love of God, expressed in such poetic form as to win him the name of "The Minnesinger of Divine Love." The mysticism of Ruysbroeck, Suso, and Tauler sheds a serene and steady light amid the gloom of the great Schism, and contrasts with the false illuminism, the errors of Quietism and Pantheism, which were rife in that troubled period and against which they raised their voices in warning.

The copy of Suso's *Horologia aeternae Sapientiae*, belonging to the Monastery of Windesheim, is still extant, and is kept in the archives of the city of Zwolle (*vide* Acquoy, iii, 277).

In 1423 the Windesheimers, who have been claimed by some writers as forerunners of the Protestant Reformation, had an opportunity of showing their perfect submission to the Holy See. Pope Martin V refused to confirm, as Bishop of Utrecht, the candidate (Rudolph Van Diepholt) presented by some of the most powerful Chapters of the Diocese,* and appointed Sweder van Culenberg to the Bishopric. Several important cities of the province, among them Deventer, would not acknowledge him as Bishop, and an interdict was therefore laid on the Diocese. "Certain Canons of Utrecht, governors and men having authority, came together," says the Chronicle, "and going into our Monasteries, one after the other, laid before the brethren, who were assembled in the choir, this decree, that either they must forthwith chant the service and begin again in their presence the celebration of the Divine Mysteries that had been interrupted, or depart out of their house and from the land." All the Canons Regular preferred exile to a want of loyalty and obedience to the Holy See. Then were seen in the early fifteenth century scenes such as have been often witnessed in France in the nineteenth, for some of the brethren, refusing to leave unless force were resorted to, were led or dragged forth by violence from the choir. The Canons dispersed and found refuge in various Monasteries; the Prior of Windesheim and his brethren went to a Monastery of the Congregation near Nordhorn, "in the territory of the Count of Bentheim," the Prior of Zwolle departed to the country of Guelderland, and the Prior and the Community of Mount St Agnes went by sea towards Friesland, to a Monastery, the reformation of which had been already begun by the Fathers of Windesheim and Mount St Agnes. It is curious to see what in those times of small independent states was accounted exile. "For three years," says the Chronicle, "they were exiles from their own land for the Name of Christ and to keep the obedience of the Church of God."

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* On the death of Frederick of Blankenheim, who had foreseen that after his death troubles would arise. "This venerable and learned prelate, knowing the manners of the cities, the seditious ways of some of the nobles and their insolence, often showed great discretion and valour in restraining them. 'After my death,' said he, 'the men of Utrecht shall know that they had a good Lord; for they all desire to be masters and to have none set over them, wherefore it shall go ill with them" (*Chron. of Windesheim*, chap. xxxiv).

When at length an apostolic Legate (the Bishop of Macon) was sent to arrange a peace and to remove the interdict from the illustrious Rudolph, the Priors and Fathers of the Congregation of Windesheim and Mount St Agnes, with many other devout priests and persons that had obeyed the interdict, entered Utrecht with joy, having met the Legate in amity and concord. "Then did each one of the Priors with his community return to his Monastery, and they bore with them sheaves of peace, and they joined together in praising God who woundeth and also healeth . . . so they rejoiced in the Lord and gave thanks because they were found worthy to suffer exile for His Name and to return again, for they came back before the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary" (1432).

In the year 1451 we have an account of the visit to Windesheim of the celebrated Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, sent by Pope Nicholas V as Papal Legate to the Netherlands and Northern Germany. Though the Chronicler only mentions the preaching of the Jubilee, the Cardinal's mission brings before us nearly all the great interests of the Church at this period. He was charged to promote a Crusade against the Turks, to visit and reform parishes, Monasteries, etc., to reunite the Hussites with the Church, and to treat with the Duke of

Burgundy* concerning a peace between England and France; he was also to endeavour to appease the dissension between the Duke of Cleves and the Archbishop of Cologne. In his journey through the Netherlands he was accompanied by Denys the Carthusian, himself a great mystic and an enthusiastic admirer of Blessed John Ruysbroeck, whom he calls " Doctor divinus." Denys was an ardent promoter of the projected Crusade, having written to the Pope and to the Christian Princes to urge it. But the old Chronicler is not bent on recording these things; he gives us a pleasant picture of the great and learned prelate, and of the people coming out in crowds to meet him, singing their welcome with the delightful spontaneity of those bygone days. There is a special interest attaching to this contemporary account of the manner in which the Jubilee was preached and the doctrine of Indulgences explained, by the Papal Legate, just about thirty years before the birth of Luther; we note how " he shook off from his hands all the gifts which were offered him," and insisted that others should act in like manner, and so though the chapter in which the Cardinal's visit is chronicled is somewhat lengthy, it seems well worth giving almost in full:

" In the year of the Lord 1451, being the year after that in which the Jubilee was celebrated in Rome, came that most Reverend Father in Christ, Nicholas of Cusa, a priest and Cardinal, with the title of St Peter ad Vincula,† being also Legate for Germany.

" Coming down from the city from the utmost parts of the land to which he was deputed, he was escorted by all the princes of that country, prelates and magistrates, with a great company of horsemen and by all the clergy, secular and religious, and the common people also, who hastened in a vast crowd to meet him, bearing standards and crosses; and he was entreated with great glory and the exultation of men that sang: ' Thou art come who wert greatly desired, for we awaited thee in darkness.' And others also chanted like strains.

" But the Cardinal sat humbly upon his mule, surrounded by the small company that came from Rome with him, but having also many other persons gathered from the cities through which he had passed and to which he had hastened. Before him was borne constantly the Cross which had been given him by our Apostolic Lord, which, with the staff thereof, was of silver; and going in procession to the Church, he was there received with the *Te Deum*.

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* Philip the Good. He was preparing a Crusade against the Turks, when he died at Bruges in 1467.

† The church of St Peter ad Vincula is now served by the Canons Regular of Lateran.

" When he visited them, he granted to all persons within the boundaries of the country to which he was deputed the Indulgence of the Jubilee, on these conditions: that they must be truly contrite and have made confession; and that they must give of their own free will a sum of money, proportionate to their goods and according to their abilities, giving the same to the treasuries of certain churches in Germany, which were chosen by the Bishops and Prelates of the places by his advice, the said money to be used as he directed for pious purposes in that country. This Indulgence granted full remission of all sins, not indeed absolution 'a poena et culpa,' for, as he said in my hearing at the Provincial Synod, held at Magdeburg, the Apostolic See has never been wont to grant Indulgences in such form, but her custom is, indeed, to give remission of all sins;* the Cardinal went on to explain that the canonical penance for one mortal sin lasting seven years, it would be scarce possible for a man guilty of many such to perform all the penance due. 'Therefore,' he said, 'Indulgences are granted, that by this means a man may, out of the treasure of the Church, supply the lack that he knoweth in the matter of making worthy satisfaction.' For this cause it is very profitable to a Christian to gain such an Indulgence, for the soul, being purged thereby, may be presented after this mortal life before the Face of the glory of God in Heaven. In order to make all clerks and folk within his jurisdiction fit to gain such Indulgences, the Cardinal appointed certain confessors in the cities, with power to absolve those who confessed to them, even in such cases as are reserved, and this they were to do by authority from the Apostolic

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* The Council of Constance had revoked all Indulgences containing the formula "a culpa et poena." A plenary Indulgence always presupposes sacramental Confession, in which the guilt of sin has been forgiven, but the effects of sin are only obliterated when release from penalty as well as from guilt has been obtained; hence the use of the expression "remissionem peccatorum" in the formula of an Indulgence always means remission of the penalty of sin.

See, without any money being given. He said, moreover, that those who presumed to give anything to their confessors in violation of this his mandate were not absolved, and did not gain the grace of the Jubilee; but on his departure, he ordered that a full reward should be given to the confessors for their labours from the treasure aforesaid. He himself shook off his hands all the gifts which were offered to him in abundance by the great ones of the land and other rich men, saving only meat and drink, without which one cannot pass through this present life, and he desired that others also should act thus, he having authority in this matter.

"This Reverend Father, finding many abuses in divers Churches, and even among Christ's faithful people in certain places, did extirpate and root out the same, and by new edicts, which he put forth in writing, he bade that the faithful should be recalled to the ancient rules of Holy Church and kept therein. Likewise he was zealous, both by his own acts and through his deputies, to recall the Communities of divers Orders and of both sexes to their primitive institutions and the observances of the Rule, for they had lapsed miserably from the true path thereof, wherefore he did reform them.

"Having traversed the upper parts of Austria, Thuringia, Saxony, and Westphalia, the first Order and Chapter which he visited was that near Nordhorn, and he came thither because he loved our Order well and also the Fathers of the General Chapter, which was known to him of old as having the odour of a good reputation. So he entered into the Monastery with those few followers, celebrated Mass, preached, and in word and deed showed himself to all humble and kindly.

"Then coming to Deventer, accompanied by a great multitude of people, he was received in glorious wise, and there, gladly acceding to the instant prayer of the Prior of Windesheim, he went to the sisterhood at Diepenveen. Here he saw about a hundred veiled nuns with no small number of lay sisters, donates,* and servants, living the Regular Life in holy conversation and excellent discipline, whereat he rejoiced greatly in the Lord, held a conference and granted Indulgences.

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* The Donates, of whom not more than five were allowed in each Monastery without a special leave of the General Chapter, were not properly speaking religious, as were the lay brothers and sisters. These made the three vows of religion according to an approved Rule, whereas the Donates only promised obedience and fidelity to the Monastery and the General Chapter. They gave their goods to the Community which undertook to take care of them for life,

"After this he came to Windesheim, which is three miles distant from Deventer, and a great company with him, where the brothers gave hospitality, for one night, to nearly a hundred guests besides the members of their own household, but when morning was come, the day being the Octave day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a certain Bishop, who was the companion of his journey, preached a fair sermon in the Chapter House after Prime, and the Cardinal himself followed and delivered a most excellent discourse of his own. Then these being ended, he sang High Mass with great solemnity, as was fitting, many servers standing by him and the brothers chanting together. After this he dined in the Refectory with the Brethren, observing the discipline of the cloister, keeping silence* and listening to the holy reading, and those who ministered to him showed him due honour. In all these things, by the kindliness of his words and deeds, he showed before all that saw him how greatly he loved our Monastery and all that dwelt in it; as also the fathers, brothers, and nuns of our Chapter, which regard, as he said openly, he had learned from the Supreme Pontiff, our Apostolic Lord."

The Cardinal granted the Indulgence to all who belonged to the Windesheim Chapter, both men and women, and gave special faculties to the Prior of the Mother-House, with power to transmit them to all the Priors of the Congregation. Being asked whether a religious might go to Rome without special license, in order to gain the benefits of the Jubilee according to the tenor and ordinances of the Apostolic Bulls, he made

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and they agreed on their part to perform such work as might be required of them. There were Donates belonging to all classes; and in Monasteries of men there were clerical Donates, for priests would sometimes ask to spend their lives in this seclusion, though being for some reason unable to undertake the responsibilities of the Religious Life (*vide* Acquoy, vol. i, p. 115).

* The Refectory was a place of strict silence. "In Oratorio, Dormitorio, Bibliotheca et Refectorio, omni tempore silentio servamus," say the Constitutions. The faithful observance of Rule, not even relaxed in favour of a Papal Legate, must have, indeed, contrasted with what the Cardinal sometimes witnessed in his work of Reform. John Busch tells how he himself, in his visitations, came across Monasteries where banquets were held at which even women were present.

answer that our Lord Pope Nicholas V had declared by the oracle of his living voice: "Better is Obedience than Indulgence."

"So these things being duly finished, the most Reverend Lord Cardinal was solemnly escorted by the Prior of Windesheim to the Monastery of Bethlehem at Zwolle, which house pertaineth to our Order and Chapter, and next they went to Kampen (for both houses are in the Diocese of Utrecht), and a great company went with them.

"Then William, the venerable Prior of Windesheim, returned with great joy to his own house after receiving the letters* recording the privileges granted to his Chapter, which were granted to him in gracious wise and after receiving also the Cardinal's blessing."

Cardinal de Cusa had found among the Fathers of Windesheim zealous collaborators in the work of reform he had so much at heart: and none was more successful than John Busch, the writer of the Chronicle, who has left us in his *De Reformatione Monasteriorum* a sad picture of the abuses prevalent at that period among the old Orders. The Cardinal had received his early education at the School of the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, so he must, at least, have heard of the Windesheimers before the Holy Father expressed an esteem for them, which, coming from the Vicar of Christ, must have given them great consolation. The education of the promising young student of Deventer had been completed at the Universities of Heidelberg and Padua, and he acquired a widespread reputation for learning. His public career began at the Council of Basle, where, besides working for the political and religious unity of Christendom, he urged a reform of the Calendar. Entrusted with a mission to Constantinople, he greatly helped to bring about the Council of Florence, gaining over to the plan the Greek Emperor, and many Patriarchs and Archbishops. It was only on an express command of the Pope that he consented to receive the honour of the Cardinalate. Contemporary writers bear out the expressions of admiration of the Windesheim Chronicler, for Cusa is said to have appeared everywhere as an "angel of peace and light." His attempts to reform a convent of Poor Clares and one of Benedictine Nuns, who were protected by Sigmund, Duke of Austria and

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* These letters are still extant in the Royal Library at the Hague, MS. 351 (Acquoy, vol. iii, p. 292).

Count of the Tyrol, brought difficulties and even persecution on the Cardinal. He was imprisoned, and the treatment he endured was the cause of an illness to which he succumbed while on his way to Leghorn, whither Pius II had sent him that he might hasten on the preparations of the Genoese Crusaders. He was about sixty-seven at the time of his death in 1467.

John Busch gives us an account of another reformer—this one a canonized Saint—whom he knew personally, having met him on his missionary journeys through Germany, and he tells us of the enthusiasm with which St John Capistran was received in those very provinces and cities in which half a century later the teaching of Luther was to retard the true reform, and to produce troubles and disorder culminating in the civil wars of the sixteenth century. St John Capistran was born in 1385, and studied with success at Perugia, of which city he became Governor. He took part in the political struggles of the Italian states, but during an imprisonment on false charges he reflected on the instability of earthly things, and resolved to enter the Order of St Francis. In the religious life he practised great austerities, giving only three or four hours to sleep, and devoting the rest of the night to prayer. He was the friend and disciple of St Bernardine of Siena, under whom he studied Theology, and who communicated to him his ardent devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus and to Our Lady; from St Bernardine, too, he learned the method of preaching which so strongly appealed to the people of the time. He traversed the provinces of Italy and extended his apostolic labours to Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Poland, and being sent on a mission to France, he there met and encouraged St Colette, the reformer of the Poor Clares. In 1451 he went as Papal Nuncio to Austria, and was strenuous in promulgating the Crusade against the Turks. The famous Hunyady greatly relied on him for maintaining the spirit of the Christian troops when Mahomet II advanced against Belgrade in 1456. St John Capistran intrepidly exposed his person, actually leading the left wing of the army, and at the moment when fortune seemed to be turning against the Christians and the soldiers were beginning to waver he held aloft the Cross, promising them victory in the Name of Jesus. Inspired with confidence, they fell on the infidels with such force that the enemy fled in disorder, and it has been said that the great victory was as much due to the Saint as to

Hunyady himself. John Capistran died that same year at the age of seventy-one.

We will now give Busch's account of his meeting with the Saint: "In the year 1452 a certain brother who belonged to the Order of the Friars Minor, a Doctor *decretorum* and a follower of St Bernardine,* was sent by our Apostolic Lord to preach and convert the Bohemians, and his name was John of Capistran.

"Passing through Thuringia, Saxony, Misnia, and Moravia, he was received with glory by the Princes of the Land, and all the clergy and people, who came out in procession to meet him, bearing crosses and standards, and singing devoutly the hymn *Deduxit justum*, they escorted him to a convenient Church. First of all, and before dinner, he celebrated Mass publicly, for which purpose a small shrine was made and raised aloft on the market-place, and afterwards he preached there, in the Latin tongue, to all the people for three or four hours, gesticulating with hands and feet, after the Italian fashion, to emphasize the words. He told me that in Erfurt there were, according to his reckoning, sixty thousand people present when he preached, the men standing on one side and the women on the other. Another Doctor of the same Order followed him immediately, interpreting the Latin discourse which he had delivered, and turning it word for word into the Teutonic tongue, which he was able to do, because as he listened to the sermon he wrote it in order on a parchment.

"But after dinner all the sick of that country came together into the market-place, and sat down in a circle, and he coming to them with the Brothers of his Order which had been reformed in excellent wise, touched the head of each sick man with the relics which he had brought with him, and some he made whole of any sickness wherewith they were bound—that is to say, those who had good faith that they should recover their health.

"These things I saw done in Erfurt, Weimar, Naumburg, and Halle, for I followed him, and marvelled, because I had never read in holy books that the like was done anywhere. In Leipsig it is said that he converted sixty subordinate members of that University by means of a skull which he showed to the people from the pulpit in the market-place, and there did invest these persons with the Habit of his Order.

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* St Bernardine was canonized by Nicholas V only six years after his death.

"Afterwards, when the Christians were struggling against the Turks, by the aid of his prayers and blessing he gained from God a great victory for them, and even now after his death he is illustrious for miracles performed through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, God for ever and ever. Amen."

V

THE SPIRIT OF WINDESHEIM EXEMPLIFIED IN ITS MEMBERS

"Ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos," said Our Lord, and in our childhood we learnt from our Catechism that one of the proofs that the Church is holy is "the eminent holiness of so many of her children." There is, indeed, no surer sign that the Rules of an Institute were written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God than that they should produce fruits of holiness in the lives of those who follow them. The Chronicles of Windesheim abound in examples of those who, according to the expression of St Augustine's Rule, kept all things therein commanded *tamquam amatores*, and "being inflamed with the love of spiritual beauty, spread the sweet odour of Christ."

It will be quite in keeping with the spirit of Windesheim to begin . . . not by an account of the holy Priors who ruled the Congregation, winning the admiration of princes and prelates, nor by the life of the author of the book of world-wide fame—the *Imitation of Christ*—but by a short notice of one who perfectly lived up to the motto: "Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari," who, though of good birth and considerable fortune, was content to sanctify himself in the lowly state of a donate* of Windesheim.

It gives us some idea of the lawlessness of the times and the violent passions rife in the world which these men forsook for a life of such deep humility, to read that when Albert of Wynbergen entered Windesheim, bringing with him "much temporal riches, including six hundred French crowns," the Brethren were afraid his kinsfolk would burn down the Monastery, "wherefore they took down the thatched roof of the dormitory and roofed it with beams, battens, and tiles above these, as may be seen to this day; also to preserve the house in safety they appointed two Brothers to watch together by night." Of Brother Albert we are told that he was careful "to abase himself the more by reason of his riches." He had been a disciple of our first Fathers, and had moulded himself on their example. "The virtue of humility shone forth in him more brightly than in any other, in all his discourses, gestures, acts, and behaviour, always choosing the humbler exercises, the lower place, and the most worthless implements. . . . He ever avoided glory and high places as a sort of plague and poison to the soul, and he rejoiced and was glad in lowly words and deeds, so that we often marvelled seeing that he desired humble things as others desire lofty, and regarded the humiliation of the outer man as being the exaltation of the inner. But herein he followed chiefly the precept of the Apostle, that humility is the virtue of Christ, for saith St Paul: 'I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me,' and that power is humility."

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* See note on p. 45, chap. iv.

The humble brother had received a good education. "He was," says the Chronicle, "a competent grammarian and very learned in Holy Scripture." Aware of this, and seeing that "grace shone forth from him," even the Choir Brethren would sometimes come to him as he sat in his cell on feast days to ask spiritual counsel, "but to these he would never give his own experience or opinion, but would set forth the sayings of the holy Fathers . . . and thus he kept himself in humility . . . for although he was filled with every virtue, yet he thought in his wonted humility that he was poorer, more sinful, more needy than all the rest."

The office of Refectorian was committed to him and he held it continuously for nearly thirty years. "He ministered diligently to the Brothers in the Refectory, providing all things needful, and showing much charity, honour, and reverence towards them; also he perceived that he gained no small increase of devotion from this, namely, that he was held worthy to be the servant of his devout Brothers, who themselves served God their Maker night and day. For holy Angels also were there present, ministering to these same Brothers, and to these he conjoined himself in heart, and as he set meats before the Brethren or took them away, he would bow heart and head and worship God, seeing with the eye of faith and pondering in his mind how that the souls and bodies of the Brethren were temples of the Holy Trinity and habitations of the Holy Ghost,* because, being fellow-citizens with the Saints and of the household of God, they bore Jesus in their bosom always, but especially after Communion. He bore himself, therefore, after this manner in the Refectory, and showed such charity to all and each as he would have displayed had he been an Angel communing with Angels. . . . During his toil he was never given to empty talk . . . but his words were always about God, good exercises, progress in virtue, the readings in the Refectory or other portions of Holy Scripture. . . . It was also his wont to rouse the others for Prime, and he thought that by undertaking this small task, and by careful diligence therein, he gained a real share in all the good deeds that the Brothers should do during the ensuing day. . . . He exercised himself continually upon the Life and Passion of Christ, and by meditating devoutly thereon, imbued his mind with holy thoughts and made progress without ceasing in Faith, Hope, and Charity; also step by step he reached understanding of all the Holy Scriptures by contemplating Christ's sufferings upon the Cross, so that being illumined and enkindled in the knowledge and love of God, he seemed to walk not outwardly in the world and the flesh, but inwardly in spirit and truth. When he had exercised himself for a great while in virtues, he put forth a handbook in which is clearly shown his knowledge of Holy Writ. Besides this, he copied many great and notable books upon parchment in large black letters for the Library, each of which he corrected accurately to a tittle, as his own handwriting and name at the end of the volumes do testify to this day." His Superiors, seeing his worth and capacities, determined to raise him to the priesthood, but like St Augustine himself, he dreaded the dignity. When the purpose of Superiors first came to his ears " he was stricken with amazement . . . and he complained bitterly that he was unworthy, insufficient and unfit to bear the burden of this most excellent rank, which the Holy Angels themselves might fear . . . wherefore he sought with sighs, groanings, and tearful speech to be relieved from this necessity; but our Prior continued firm in his opinion, to which Albert, at length, gave humble and submissive assent, for he did not venture to contradict his Superior because of the obedience he had promised. . . . So having become a priest, he always behaved very humbly and devoutly in all things, keeping himself apart and separated from all worldly matter . . . and he concentrated all his exercises, both outward and inward, and directed them to this end only, that he might be chaste in body and pure of heart, having a good conscience and faith unfeigned, so that he could reverently, and so far as possible, worthily take such divine Mysteries, seeing that they are the eternal, living, and true God, the King of glory and the Lord of majesty, but he, a poor worm that crawleth on the earth." He continued even as a priest his office in the Refectory and his charge of calling the Brethren for Prime, and he would still attend the Chapter of the lay brothers four times a year, humbly "confessing his faults in the vulgar tongue," and he likewise would assist at the conferences given to these unlettered Brothers on feast-days. When there was a procession he carried the standard of the Cross, and his manner on such occasions inspired all with reverence; he was so emaciated through abstinence that "the skin scarce clave to his bones, and his appearance recalled that of the Egyptian anchorites. In his hands he carried the Cross of his crucified Lord, but in his heart and body the Cross of penitence, upon which he himself was crucified to the world." This holy Brother continued as Refectorian till almost the last day of his life, "and then being very infirm, he gave the keys with his own hand to Brother Sulpicius." He seems to have died about the year 1423, and the Chronicle ends its account of him by the quaint and, to our modern minds, rather startling statement: "He was reverently buried in the passage before the door of the Refectory, in memory of his faithful ministrations therein." Albert of Wynbergen was not the only one who, having enjoyed a good position and considerable wealth in the world, chose to embrace the humble state of a donate or lay-brother of the Congregation; indeed, it seems to have been frequent among these men who so earnestly practised "the love of God even to contempt of self," of which St Augustine writes in his *City of God.*

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* "Honour in one another God whose living temples you are made" (*Rule of St Augustine*, chap. ii, "On Humility").

Such a one was Brother Henry of Nordhorn, a Master of Arts, who hid his learning for many years, and took on himself the office of swineherd. "Once it happened," says the Chronicle, "that he was following the swine near the gate. There met him a demoniac who had been brought to the Monastery to be delivered from his evil spirit, who, seeing him walk in so humble and abject wise, did laugh and say through the mouth of the demoniac: 'Ah, Master Henry, thou didst not walk thus when thou wast in Paris and lector in the Cathedral.

Leave thy swine, therefore, and return to thy former state.' But the Brother passed by with bowed head and answered nothing. So the Brothers who had heard this were not a little amazed that one so well lettered had devoted himself in the fear of God to fulfilling this most lowly task, and had chosen to feed the swine, but although it came by little and little to the knowledge of all that this was a learned Master, yet he asked to continue in the duty that he had begun, and to serve God to his life's end in humility."

Brother John Kessel, or Ketel, who long fulfilled the office of cook to the Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, had intended becoming a priest, and had prepared for himself rich vestments, gorgeous with gold embroidery, such as would have befitted a Lord Abbot. But he felt the call to serve God in deep poverty and humility, and consenting joyfully to die to self, in order to live wholly to his crucified Lord, he clad himself in an old grey habit, and donned the linen apron of a cook, begging only to serve the Brothers of Deventer in the kitchen as long as he lived. This he did with great cheerfulness of spirit, making of the kitchen a house of prayer, and, alluding to his former ambition, he would say: "Am I not become a great priest and prelate? For twice a day I administer Communion to the Brothers." For in preparing food for them he had the devout intention to renew Christ in their person by giving them the strength needful for their service of God. Jesus Christ appeared to him as he lay on his deathbed, and after his death one of the Brothers of the Windesheim Congregation* saw him in vision "refulgent in excellent beauty, and his fingers were decked with rings of gold, set with precious stones, because he had been most liberal in giving to the poor and very humble in his own station." His death occurred in 1398, and his biography was written by Thomas à Kempis, whose friendship and admiration he had won.

It would be pleasant to linger with these humble folk whose virtues the Chronicler loves to dwell on, but some account must be given of the Priors who helped to maintain the Congregation in such fervour and strict observance.

Several chapters are devoted to the life and virtues of Father John Vos of Heusden, who was elected Prior in 1391 to the great joy of all. "He alone wept," says

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* Henry Mande, the great Contemplative of Mount St Agnes.

Busch, " and all our Fathers and Brothers sought to console him with loving discourses." In his office of Prior he is said to have been a " second Bernard "; the Saint of Clairvaux seems ever to have been the ideal of the first Fathers of Windesheim, who inherited Gerard Groote's special devotion to him. Of Prior John, we are told that " such was the beauty of his inward man that sometimes it burst out outwardly in visible signs, and an abundant stream of grace and dignity and purity from within seemed to be pouring forth upon his outward appearance. In all things he preferred humility, and his goodness was of sweet savour. . . . In his soul he spread a great feast for Christ the Lord, and showed a mind that was caught up above earthly things, but present every day before God and His Saints in heaven, for his delight was in the clearness of the inward vision, and the sweetness of the Divine love that was to him a joy above all the joys of this world. He saw what God was to him, and had a sweet foretaste of His goodness and benignity to the soul that seeketh Him in truth."

This holy man's occupation before God in his soul was so great that before he was appointed Prior, though he was known to be " prudent and to surpass most men in natural understanding," when he was asked his opinion about external business he would answer: " I know not "; wherefore the Brethren would laughingly call him " John Know-Naught "; but, says the Chronicler, " he thought but little on external things, since they must ever pass away, and in his heart he magnified Christ only and His glorious Kingdom, wherefore he said: ' I know not,' and left such matters to the Prior and Community, believing that under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit they would order all things well."

His capacity for business was shown by the flourishing state of the Monastery under his government, and the Chronicle tells of the many buildings he erected and the improvements he made, the grove of oaks he planted, and the orchard he " set forth in pleasant fashion."

He was athirst for the salvation of souls, eager above all things for God's glory, and having a burning zeal towards sinners, a zeal that was ever accompanied with kindliness; but it was his humility which seems to have most struck all who knew him. A visitor to Windesheim, accustomed to meet the lordly prelates of the period, who often surpassed secular princes in their magnificence, once said to John Busch, who records his words: " I thought that one of so great fame, the Father of all the Chapter and a person of such reverence and authority, had walked with head erect and haughty look carrying himself high, that he would be surrounded by an obsequious crowd and show high spirit and glory; but now I see him among the Brethren holding converse in most fatherly wise, and behaving like a most gentle lamb; and yet by them, as by all who see him, both religious and persons of the world, he is held in the greatest reverence and reputation." Even the inmates of Windesheim, where humility was practised in such perfection, marvelled at the degree to which their holy Prior had attained in this virtue. " I have seen many persons of our Order and other Fathers, both holy and humble, and high-minded also," says Busch, who had travelled far and wide on his work of reform, meeting men now enrolled among the Saints, " but in none have I seen such great loftiness of mind and boldness of constancy in God, united with so great lowliness and modesty."

" Whithersoever he happened to come," he adds, " and in other Monasteries beside our own, he was received as an Angel of God, for men knew and perceived in their hearts that by reason of the presence of such a guest the Holy Spirit of God came also to them." But we must refer to the Chronicle, printed in Latin in 1621, for further details of this holy man's life, and give only one of its closing scenes, full of simple charm, described by an eye-witness.

" In the year of our Lord, 1424, our Venerable Father John of Heusden, being now old and stricken in years, perceived in himself that the day of his departure from this world to the Father in heaven was at hand, for he had finished his warfare." So on the Monday following the Sunday called *Jubilate*, he called together all who had assisted at his last General Chapter, among whom were several Rectors of Houses and some Confessors of the Sisterhoods, and " all dined together in the Refectory, as is the custom when a General Chapter is holden, and the Brothers of our house had been careful to prepare for them a meal somewhat daintier than usual, in their joy at receiving guests so beloved, as indeed was fitting, and they mingled wine for them to drink. Then a devout, aged Father, who was a good, clear and speedy reader, read them a commentary of Augustine upon the Psalm: 'Jubilate Deo omnis terra, psalmum dicite nomini ejus. . . .' But after dinner and when Nones were done, the Brothers of our Community, old and young alike, with the guests who were there present, assembled at the sound of the bell in the orchard, not far from the green that is about the hop-garden, where we all sat down upon the grass." Then "with humble modesty and in his peaceful voice," the Prior addressed the white-robed Canons as they sat round him under the orchard-trees, recommending the closest union among them, that they should have "one heart and one soul in the Lord" and be ever "the Champions of the Common Life." "So long," he said, "as all shall continue in this simple garb, lowly behaviour, outward poverty, mutual charity, and the Common Life, so long shall they continue in prosperity as they are to-day; and if the Apostles of God were present in this life, they would not bid us live otherwise than as live the Brothers and Sisters of our Congregation . . . inasmuch as this was the manner of life of Jesus Christ."

Shortly after this meeting, during a recreation in the orchard, the Prior insisted much on charity to the poor, and on the hospitable entertainment of needy travelling clerks: "If we withdraw our hand from these poor and devout guests, the Lord also will withdraw His hand from us . . . for when 'Give' is shut out from a house, then 'It shall be given' is also likewise excluded."

We will pass over the account of Prior John's holy death, which occurred on December 2, 1424, but we cannot omit a circumstance connected with it which gives us a first glimpse of Thomas à Kempis, and constitutes the most important evidence as to the authorship of the *Imitation of Christ*.* "A few days before his death, it happened that two notable Brothers of our Order, from Mount St Agnes, near Zwolle, had come to consult with our Prior about certain matters, and one of these was Thomas à Kempen, a man of approved life, who wrote divers holy books, namely that concerning *The Imitation of Christ*, which doth begin, 'He that cometh after Me,' and others also.

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* The Gersenists tried to prove that the passage is an interpolation, but failing in this, suggested that Busch was *mistaken* in attributing the *Imitation* to Thomas à Kempis. When we realize that the two Canons were contemporary and that their respective Monasteries were within walking distance from each other, we see the absurdity of this idea. The whole question is discussed at length by Sir Francis Cruise in his *Thomas à Kempis*.

"Now, on the night of his coming hither, this man saw a dream which foretold the future, for in the visions of the night he saw a concourse of the blessed spirits in heaven, who were hastening as if to the death of someone, and straightway he heard in his dream a knocking upon the *tabula** as if for the passing of a dying man, so that being roused thereby he awoke. Then he rose from his bed wishing to see what had happened, but he found no one, for it was before the fifth hour in the morning and all the Brothers were yet asleep. So returning to himself he began to think that the Prior should soon depart hence." Thomas à Kempis told no one at Windesheim of this vision or dream, no doubt fearing to sadden the Brethren already anxious about their Father's failing health; but he bade a "certain clerk of Brabant" who accompanied him to warn the Prior's spiritual director, a Father Herman living at Trèves, that if he would see Father John again he must come quickly, "for if the vision I have seen this night be true, he shall not long be here." But the Prior died on that same day, a Saturday, just after the *Gloria in excelsis* at High Mass, which is sung before the Advent season in honour of the Blessed Virgin, to whom he bore a special love. This was on December 2, 1424.

In the life of Henry Mande we shall see how, on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, he saw in vision Father John of Heusden in great glory.

The allusion to this holy Prior's special devotion to the Blessed Virgin recalls the fact that, as all true children of the Church, the Windesheimers ever linked together a strong personal love of Jesus, which finds its expression in the *Imitation*, with that of His Blessed Mother. When, in 1387, the first Church of the Congregation was dedicated to her, Hubert, Bishop of Hippo, suffragan to the Bishop of Utrecht, "ordained that the Blessed Virgin should be the chief Patroness of our Monastery . . . therefore she hath the divine right to defend each several person that pertaineth to our house or to the Chapter, to guard our well-being, keeping us from evil and holding us to good."

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* "The *Tabula sonatila* was apparently a piece of hard wood' to which two other smaller pieces were loosely fastened, so that when shaken it gave forth a musical sound and served the purpose of our modern gong" (Gasquet's *English Monastic Life*, p. 128).

The Monastery of Marienwald, near Nordhorn, was one of the many dedicated to her,* and its saintly Prior, Henry of Loder, saw her once in a vision " clad in a robe of exceeding whiteness, but besprinkled with blood. He saluted her with his customary reverence and said: ' O glorious Lady, who hath defiled thy lily-white and precious vesture with blood? Is it I that have done this crime by my sins?' But the most kindly Mother replied in gracious wise: ' Most Beloved, thou hast not done me this hurt, but a certain lay brother who doth desire to leave my Monastery and return to the world, despising the Blood of my Son, hath thus stained my garments,' and this we know was indeed so."

Prior Henry Loder, to whom this vision was granted, was born in the fortress and castle of that name near Osnaburg, and despite his high birth, being " lacking in clerkly knowledge," he entered the Monastery of Windesheim as a lay-brother, and performed the most menial tasks with all diligence. But he was later on received among the Choir Brethren and ordained priest, making his profession under Prior John of Heusden. He is described by the Chronicler as " a hardy Westphalian." This epithet is frequently used with regard to the Westphalians, who seem to have had a reputation for hardiness and strength of body; while of the Frieslanders we are told that their hearts were " rude and frozen by their bitter winters "; and of South Holland it is said that " the folk of that country desire to live delicately." Henry Loder held for some time the office of Sacristan at Windesheim, " and being skilled in craftmanship, he cast, fitted, and made an instrument having seven bells with their tongues and an iron wheel, and this he would sound when he went round to awaken the Brethren chanting: ' May the grace of the Holy Ghost be present with us, and make our hearts an habitation for Himself.'

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* Among them were Mary's Vale near Arnhem, Mary's Mount in Friesland, Mary's Throne in Brabant (afterwards united to St Martin's at Louvain), Mary's Paradise in Zealand, Our Lady of the New Light in the Diocese of Utrecht. A long list of such sweet titles as Mary's Fountain, Mary's Meadow, Our Lady of Bethlehem, of Nazareth, of Galilee, testifies to the loving devotion which made the Windesheimers love to place their Monasteries under the protection of the Queen of Heaven. The Convents of Canonesses at Bruges and Hayward's Heath are dedicated respectively to Our Lady of Nazareth and Our Lady of Good Counsel.

This instrument he set up skilfully enough above the dormitory steps, before the custodian's cell."*

It would seem that the caller enjoyed full latitude to perform his duty in the manner that most commended itself to his own devotion, for we are told of another Brother that: "It was his wont to arouse the Brethren in the middle of the night to sing Matins, giving the signal and singing that devout antiphon: 'Sing praise to God, all saints of His, and ye that hear the Lord, both small and great, for the Lord our God omnipotent reigneth; let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him.'"

Father Henry was still Sacristan when he was elected Prior of Marienwald, near Nordhorn. This Monastery was built "in a wood which was pathless, without water, thick and dense." Such a situation was no doubt favourable to the life of contemplation, which was assiduously practised there, but less conducive to temporal prosperity. The new Prior, however, soon increased the temporalities of the Monastery, while raising it to a yet higher pitch of fervour; the practice of humility in particular was so striking among the Brethren that the expression "as lowly as at Nordhorn" became proverbial in the Order.

To hard labour and penitential exercises was united a great spirit of prayer; "an abundance of divine gifts overflowed in his Monastery in those days," says John Busch, "so that both his Choir and Lay Brothers, laics and servants, seemed all to be imbued with one spirit of fervour, simplicity, humility, and love . . . it seemed, indeed, as if they were of another world than this." Prayer was continued even during the most arduous tasks, such as ploughing, threshing the corn, baking, brewing, fencing the fields, and plastering the walls round the Monastery with clay. While busy over these works they would recite the Hours of the Blessed Virgin or other Psalms, and, adds the Chronicle with quaint simplicity: "Even the beasts, the plough-oxen and horses, seemed readier to their work as if urged on by these holy sounds, to the accompaniment of which they did it."

The wonderful prosperity which succeeded the dire poverty in which Henry Loder found the Monastery of Nordhorn seems to have been the reward of his exceeding charity to the poor, for, says Busch, "He had a more open hand for giving than any that I have ever known. He never sent away any poor man uncomforted, whatever his condition . . . and the more he gave the greater was his return, even to a hundredfold . . . for his monastery grew richer in all that was needful, and so continued all the days of his life."

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* *Custos* was the name given to him who had the sacred vessels and the church vestments in his keeping.

Henry Loder was a great help to Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa in his work of the reform of Monasteries, and he was a bold defender of the oppressed, as became his knightly origin. "To all Religious persons and Devout Congregations he was an impregnable defence that could not be shaken by fear; and in all their tribulations he was an aid and protection to them that nothing could break down. . . . But to the wicked he was a stern foe, a weighty adversary, and a terror without escape; the good loved him heartily as their Father, but the evil feared him as they fear the devil. . . . Those Communities whom the towns and cities where they dwelt tried to oppress with a strong hand, or to drive away, he strove with all his might to defend . . . for he did not fear to die for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, so firm and constant of mind was he. . . . Once it happened that the Prior met a certain vassal, a deadly enemy to him, who had often threatened that if he could find him alone he would slay him; now the Prior was sitting in a carriage and driving fast along the highway, accompanied only by one companion and the driver, but his enemy when he saw him fell into a rage and gnashed upon him, saying: 'Now here shalt thou lose thy life and meet the fate wherewith I have often threatened thee.' Yet the Prior was not afraid when he heard this, but came down from his chariot, and baring his breast, said: 'If thou darest and canst do this, lo, I am prepared to die for the just cause that I maintain against thee!' But at this the tyrant was astonished and, seeing the constancy of the Prior, changed his mind and thenceforth left him in peace."

Prior Henry Loder died on July 20, 1439.

It was during his priorship that the Community of Windesheim was so hospitably received in 1429, when obliged to leave their own Monastery because they refused to disregard the interdict laid by the Holy See on the Diocese of Utrecht. The exiled Community had then at its head Prior William Voren, or Vornken.

He had succeeded Gerard Naaldwyck, who had been elected on the death of Prior John of Heusden, but had resigned after a few months, "for," says the Chronicle, "he felt the honour shown him to be a pain and a torment, rather than a glory and a dignity, so that he sought with most instant prayers to be absolved, and he obtained his request." It was said of him that "the common experience of man sufficed not to trace the course of the profound humility which was rooted in the very depths of his heart, so lowly was he in his own eyes . . . thinking himself more vile, sinful, and debased than any man, and believing that all others surpassed him in every virtue. Heart and lips and all his gestures showed forth the like spirit; and he seemed ever to have come from the presence of God and the paradise of delights . . . yea, he was as one that enjoyeth every day the glory of God's presence, and dwelleth thereupon in the inner contemplation of his heart."

It is touching to read of the penance imposed on him by the General Chapter for his resignation; for the Fathers feared that "his rejection of the honour and burden might be imitated by others, for this was the second time a Prior had given up his charge; wherefore the Chapter did not neglect to guard against this, and by way of penance they laid upon Gerard that he should take his food sitting on the bare ground in the Refectory, at the feet of the Fathers and Brothers of the Order, there assembled, which penance he gladly embraced and devoutly performed, saying afterwards to his familiar friends that he was much more quiet and peaceful of heart when sitting thus upon the ground, than he would have been as prelate of them all, for lowliness had so become part of his nature that he thought to be humbled was to be exalted, and that the contempt of the world is glory. In all things blessed be God, Who hath granted us to see and have in our house such Fathers."

We are indeed far from the spirit of clinging to high places which prevailed among prelates of the time. Busch tells us of a certain Abbey of Hildesheim "that standeth in mighty state," whose Abbot resisted all efforts of ecclesiastical superiors to get him to resign, saying he intended an Abbot's soul to depart from his body, "and as he was in the Choir chanting the words: 'Ego dixi: in dimidio dierum meorum vadam ad portas inferi,' he was smitten by apoplexy, and died as by miracle, after which the abbey was reformed." How rare flight from ecclesiastical dignities was at this period is shown by the astonishment of the Bishop of Utrecht when, on a previous occasion, a Prior of Windesheim had resigned. Seeing the out-going Prior " exulting much over his resignation," while the newly elected Father John of Heusden " lamented and sorrowed exceedingly," he turned to his counsellors and said: " Saw ye ever the like? These Fathers desire to serve God in a lowly station, and being made Prior, they hold the office to be no honour but a burden."

But to return to Prior William, who was one of the great Priors of the Order which he governed for twenty-five years. He and John of Heusden ruled (with the short interval of Gerard Naaldwyck's tenure of office) for sixty-two years, " as two olive trees yielding clear oil and as lamps giving light before God to our Community and Chapter," says the Chronicle. " They incorporated about seventy Monasteries with the Chapter of Windesheim, and by their holy conversation, zeal for the salvation of souls, and regular discipline, they caused our good repute to be spread abroad to all the land of Germany, Italy, France, even as far as Rome, the citadel of the world and the throne of the Supreme Pontiff."

William had entered at Windesheim when still very young and all were struck by his fervour. Though in the world he had been " delicately nurtured and was wont to wear gay and broidered vesture, and a fair girdle of silver above his costly garments that were fringed all about the hem," in religion he was noted for his love of poverty and mortification, and " would wear garments rubbed to the last thread so that one could count them all "; when obliged to entertain guests he would not forego his wonted mortification at table, but would manage to take for himself " unpalatable food and rancid morsels." Throughout the life of Prior William, which is given at considerable length in the Chronicle, the note of austerity is struck: in the early years of his religious life he had been elected Prior of a Monastery in South Holland where he remained but one year, for the " delicate living " there prevalent could not agree with his own strenuous and fervent manner of life, wherefore he called the Community together and said: " My most beloved Brothers, this long while have I seen that your desires and manner of life cannot be consonant with my vows and the Institution which I follow; for ye are fain to walk too delicately in the straight way of the Lord and the path of Holy Religion, although ye have promised to keep the strict life of penance and to be servants of God and the Spirit, not of flesh and blood. Now therefore, having reckoned up this matter, I resign mine Office of Prior, and I return to Windesheim to die in my own nest (*in nidulo meo*). The Lord be with you, preserving you from evil and leading you to all good. Amen."

And so he went to the Monastery of his Profession, where the Brethren walked valiantly in the "Royal Way of the Holy Cross." Mortification was, indeed, held in high esteem at Windesheim, and the Brethren had to be restrained from adding to the austerities of the Rule* more penance than was considered, even in those days of robust constitutions, compatible with the "health of mind and body," for which the Church makes us pray. In this medieval Chronicle greater prominence is ever given to charity, humility, and prayer than to any outward observances, and hard and humble labour holds a place of honour. There is a sane-mindedness about the Spiritual School of Windesheim which, while rising to enthusiasm and to the love which "knows no measure and counts nothing impossible" (*Imit.*, Bk. III, ch. v), yet kept its disciples from the extravagances characterizing false mysticism. They showed their practical belief in the doctrine that there "is no higher way above or safer way below than the way of the Holy Cross," while "they lifted themselves above themselves and above all things visible," says the Chronicle, "striving to keep themselves ever in the presence of God the sovereign and unchangeable good, and so knew the savour of true joys." They realized that neither action nor contemplation can build up the spiritual edifice "unless we embrace the Cross . . . wherefore our first Fathers loved this Cross of penance, and in their writings taught that their posterity must embrace the same with fervency."

We have seen how Prior William left a Monastery in which these traditions were not in vigour, and during his long tenure of office at Windesheim he maintained them in all their strictness. He is said to have been gifted with exalted contemplation and would nermai five consecutive hours or more in silent prayer in the Choir, "and albeit all leisure time was to him fit and meet for spiritual exercises, yet in the night he was especially impelled thereto, for he would prevent the vigils of the Brothers or prolong them. He kept the Feast of the Epiphany every year, with great devotion, as believing that his own vocation was therein prefigured: and he acted at the anniversary of the Dedication of our Church in like manner, remembering that he had been dedicated mystically to God when he took upon him the habit of holy Religion." He was so zealous and earnest in his assistance at the Divine Office both by day and night that the Brothers marvelled thereat, for he would never be away from it, though the great amount of important business transacted during his Priorate might well have justified occasional absence. His attendance must have increased the devotion of the Canons, for "he sang in a pleasant and sonorous tone and his voice was like a trumpet of sweet resonance, which he would send forth in fatherly and solemn wise at the chief festivals."* This holy man was a great lover of silence and solitude, and delighted in reading again and again the works of "Francis the Poet Laureate," concerning the solitary life.†

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* In the Constitutions we still read that "no disciplines, watchings, hair-cloths, and other external practices or mortifications, which are not prescribed by the Rule or Constitutions, are to be undertaken without the knowledge and consent of the Superior."

It is easy to realize that he who so loved to give himself to contemplation in his quiet cell, or in the oak grove near the Monastery, would find something congenial in the works of the poet who could write:

> "Ma pur si aspre vie ne si selvagge
> Trovar non so, ch'Amor non venga sempre
> Ragionando con meco, ed io con lui."

When he was over eighty years of age Prior William, having held the General Chapter, begged to be absolved from his office, declaring that he was useless and stricken by age, but so high was the reverence in which he was held by all and so great the love borne him by his own Community, that the Visitors, considering the perfect discipline in which he had maintained the whole Chapter to that very day, refused to absolve him. Nay, they declared they would wish him to keep his authority as long as he should live.

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* On these days the Superior fulfils the office of Hebdomadarian.

† The name of Francesco Petrarch now chiefly recalls that of Laura and his sonnets in her honour, but the *Canzoniere*, with his allegorical poem *I Trionfi*, are Petrarch's only Italian works, while his Latin works, *De Contemptu Mundi*, *De Vita Solitaria*, *De Ocio Religiosorum*, etc., were at one time widely read. The unbounded admiration for St Augustine displayed in the first of these would naturally commend it to the Canons Regular. The work consists of three Dialogues between the poet and the Saint in presence of the Eternal Truth. *De Vita Solitaria* treats of the joys of solitude: it was composed after a visit to the Charterhouse of Montrieu.

"But it happened that as he sat at supper that evening with the Visitors who were to depart next day, he was cheerful beyond his wont, and said in his talk with them: "Reverend Fathers, ye are not willing to absolve me, but, as ye shall see, the Lord will soon give me this absolution." So after supper, during which he had shown much gladness and brotherly love, they all went to rest. He rose next day for Prime and was sitting clothed upon his bed when the Brother Infirmarian came into his cell to make his confession, and the Prior pronounced the words of absolution as usual, but when he gave the penance he spoke so indistinctly that the Brother looked up and found that the Prior had been struck by apoplexy. Though he partially rallied he could never again speak plainly, yet even now the Community still waited in hopes of a recovery. Soon the Visitors returned and there was a touching scene. "The whole matter was laid before them and our Venerable Father prostrated himself upon the floor of the Chapter House, and by such sounds and signs as he could make sought absolution from his Office, which he obtained. So having received it he went round to all the Brothers in turn, and stretching out a hand to each gave thanks to them, while Visitors and Brothers alike wept."

He lived some time after this, striving to the last to follow the Common Life and giving a wonderful example of fervour to all. "At the time of the General Chapter he would kneel behind the table in the Refectory, at the feet of all the Fathers there present, asking for their pardon and prayers, so that he moved many of the said Fathers to tears: for they wept that one who had been called so long the Father of Fathers should prostrate himself at the feet of them all, and being almost speechless plead thus for pity." Prior William died in July of the year 1455, "bearing with him many sheaves of good works, and was laid to rest in the middle of the Choir at the side of John of Heusden, once our Prior to whom he was, as it were, a kinsman and Brother."

VI

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN THE CONGREGATION OF WINDESHEIM

No account of the spirituality of the Congregation of Windesheim, as manifested in the lives of its members, would be complete without some record of their devotion to the Holy Eucharist and especially to the Sacrifice of the Mass.

It must be remembered that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this devotion had not reached the development it has since obtained. The practice of Frequent Communion, so prevalent up to the eighth or ninth century, gradually declined, and in the Fourth General Council of Lateran it was found necessary to formulate the precept of Easter Communion. But this, while ensuring a yearly Communion on the part of the faithful, did not revive the frequent use of the Sacrament. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we find the rule of such an Order as that of the Poor Clares enjoining only six Communions a year, while the seraphic St Francis, in one of his letters, allowed only one Priest to celebrate Mass every day in the Convents of his Order. Among lay-folk Communion was extremely rare; thus St Louis of France communicated six times a year and St Elisabeth of Portugal only three times.

It is not easy to account for the existence of such a state of things in the "Ages of Faith." The circumstances which led to it are discussed by Bishop Hedley in his book on *The Holy Eucharist*, and by Father Dalgairns in his work on the same subject. The movement in favour of more frequent Communion, which began in the fourteenth century, was inaugurated by the mystics of the School of Tauler, Suso, and Ruysbroeck. It does not surprise us, therefore, to find a tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament among the spiritual children of the latter.

But the glory of restoring the frequent use of Holy Communion among the faithful in general was reserved for St Ignatius, St Philip Neri, and their disciples. The opposition incurred before their apostolate by those who desired frequent Communion is instanced in the lives of St Catherine of Siena and St Lydwina. The latter was known to the Fathers of Windesheim, one of whom, John Gerlac, was her relative and has left an account of her life, which was used by Thomas à Kempis in his *Vita B. Lidewigis Virginis*. From it we learn that the saint, in the three or four first years of the illness which was to make her life one of continual and intense suffering, was only allowed to communicate once a year; then came a period during which she received the Blessed Sacrament twice a year, and after that, " so much did her desire increase that six times a year she received the Lord's Body," says Thomas à Kempis, " and she would have received the same more frequently if the parish priest had not refused her." " He brought Holy Communion to her very grudgingly," and it required a vision of Christ appearing in the Host to induce him to allow her frequent Communion.

The Treatises written by Ruysbroeck* and by Thomas à Kempis on the Blessed Sacrament might be quoted to show the ardent devotion of the Canons Regular in the Low Countries to this most holy Mystery, but our object at present is rather to instance it by what we can gather from the Chronicle of Windesheim as to their practice. With this view we will give the account of the devotion manifested in celebrating Mass by that Gerard Naaldwyck, who so humbly performed the penance imposed on him for having resigned the Office of Prior. On being absolved from it he had been appointed Procurator, and continued in this charge for thirty-three years, never allowing its engrossing duties to interfere with his deep interior spirit, for his Lord, whom he daily received, suffered him not "to go from Him hungry and dry, but wholly inflamed him with the fire of love ever burning and never dying down."†

He was a man " mighty in Christ," says Busch, " nor have I ever known anyone more uplifted by divine contemplation. . . . In the body he walked with us, but in the spirit, being caught up out of himself, he seemed to be of another world, resting wholly upon God, wherefore he showed before us the very pattern of the contemplative life . . . seeing that he was Procurator he turned sometimes to outward things but never plunged wholly therein.

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* Blessed John Ruysbroeck's work is also known under the title of *The Mirror of Eternal Life*.

† See *Imitation of Christ*, Book IV, chap. xvi.

" His manner of approaching the altar for the celebration of Mass, manifestly showed that he had devoutly prepared his mind and gathered together all his inward powers for that service, and this was also shown by the effect that followed. When he came before the altar of God, having purified himself by compunction of heart and oral confession, he would present himself before the most exalted throne of God's glory, in presence of the holy Angels, seeming to be one of their company and to stand in the light of truth and grace before the supreme Trinity and the majestic splendour of the divine beauty. He was, as it were, the messenger of good tidings, the friend of the Bridegroom, a devout mediator and most faithful advocate for the whole Church of God. For in mind he was separated from all who are in the world, wherefore he entered in gazing with a pure heart, the eyes of faith and a clear vision, upon these the highest of the mighty works of God, and with reverence laid before Him his pious vows and those of all the faithful in Christ throughout the world, both the living and the dead; and he made there an offering of deep sighing and tears, with groaning of heart and ardent yearning. Then did he offer and present anew all the Passion and pain of Christ, yea, and His Blood yet warm as though He were suffering again upon the altar, and by faith and in spirit he did, in very truth, perceive that the Maker of all things was there present, He that is the joy of Angels and the felicity of Saints.

" In His presence did Gerard rejoice exceedingly, and being perfectly renewed in soul he was set afire and filled with the fire of love, wherefore he stood with body motionless, eyes closed and hands and face uplifted, for he seemed caught up above himself and united with God, at whose marvellous condescension and unspeakable goodness he was stricken with wonder and amazement, so that he stood there through all the rite without moving, save when he must do some act, for he was intent upon the divine Mysteries.

" At the end of Mass, when partaking of the most Holy Sacrament himself, he desired that all might, in spirit, receive Holy Communion with him; so he devoutly partook of the hallowed Mysteries of God in behalf of all men, to be a grace to those yet living and the glory of the faithful departed. In the final and threefold benediction, he made all to share in every blessing that is comprehended in the Mass, both every man of goodwill on earth and every soul that hath departed in a state of grace; that blessing penetrating heaven and earth and all things in them that are capable of receiving it.

"So wholly filled with fervour, divine love, and ardour was he at Mass, that a lay brother, who was then his server, told me that often when he celebrated at the altar of Holy Cross in our Church, he saw with his own eyes a great ball of fire suspended in the air above the altar and shining with exceeding brightness over Gerard's head. So the said lay brother marvelled much and was afraid, for he wondered what this might mean. But when he reflected in himself he understood that by this visible sign was signified the presence of God and the holy Angels."

We can well believe that when Gerard gave exhortations either in his own Monastery or to the Sisters of the Order "he was fired with so mighty a flame that he seemed to sit at the feet of Jesus Christ, in the light of heaven above, and thence to pour down the abundance of his store, for in the loving desire of his heart he longed most earnestly to imprint the lowliness of Christ and brotherly charity on our hearts, and he would say: 'O good Jesus, O Father most pitiful, Thou art the very God and Spirit of love to us poor worms! . . . Beloved Brothers, let us humble ourselves before the most High God, our Lover, yea, I beseech you yet more earnestly, let us ever humble ourselves.' These words he would declare again and again, repeating them with still greater devotion, and saying: 'Brothers, it is for God's sake than I implore you that we humble ourselves before His mighty hand; then shall we have whatsoever we will.' So greatly did he love humility, the very foundation of all virtues, that he kept this grace ever in his heart and upon his lips; moreover, he often exhorted us to love God and our neighbour, and he said: 'O ardour of divine love to us lowly sinners, O yearning that burnest continually and art never quenched, with how great desire didst thou cry aloud upon the Cross 'I thirst,' which thirst was for our salvation, and to gain that Thou didst deliver up Thy soul to death; in our turn, Brothers, I beseech you, let us love Him and keep the like fervent longing for Him in our heart, upon our lips, and in our deeds, and it shall suffice us': then he would sigh and cry out: 'Brothers, I beseech you that we love one another, for

"God is love," but I am the least of you all and the chief sinner. Ye know better and do far better than I.'"

Sometimes in these conferences he was so enkindled with the ardour of divine love and zeal for the goodness of God that the Brothers would say among themselves: "Our Procurator is melted once again and glowing with a fervent heat."

No wonder that the Chronicler tells us that Gerard's devotion to the Holy Sacrifice was plainly shown "by the effects which followed."

John of Heusden studied when he was raised to the priesthood "to keep himself holy and unspotted from the world, lest mouth or tongue should utter aught that might displease God Whom he should often receive with those members in the quickening Sacrament of the holy altar . . . he strove to keep the hands and fingers which should touch the Incarnate Son of God every day from the slightest thing which might offend his most loving Father, and never to stain his heart with any evil thought, because God, coming down from heaven, ought to rest therein as a Bridegroom in his chamber."

Both Prior John of Heusden and Prior William Vornken abstained from celebrating daily, for "it seemed to them a man should rather fear to be present so often before the face of the glory of God, to touch with his hands His very Son, to take Him into the mouth and hide Him in the heart; whereas by humble abstaining sometimes, even once a week, from these divine Mysteries, one is, as it were, renewed in mind and inflamed with a more ardent desire to take part in them with greater devotion."

This passage is given to show the idea prevalent at the time, at Windesheim as elsewhere; indeed, we know that it held sway with regard to Holy Communion until the promulgation in 1905 of Pius X's Decree on Daily Communion.

Of Prior William Vornken, it is said that he would neither urge anyone to celebrate daily nor forbid them to do so, though he preferred them to abstain sometimes through reverence. On one occasion he "gently chode" a certain Brother Peter whose custom it was to celebrate nearly every day, saying that it were surely more reverent "not to presume to draw so near to the abyss of light, nor thrust himself continually into the company of Angels, as though he were their fellow guest, their friend and kinsman." But Brother Peter made an answer that was humble and good to hear, saying before all the Brothers ("and I was there too," adds the Chronicler): "Most beloved Father, I have no longer any delight in this world or in this mortal life, but I rejoice in God alone, the living true and eternal God, and in this Communion of His most holy Body and Blood." Prior William gave ample proof of his own devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament; we have seen how he would remain long hours in its presence absorbed in prayer and "in any difficult business he would run to the tabernacle of his Lord, and ask His counsel there," and this at a period when visits to the Blessed Sacrament had not yet become the common practice of devout souls.

Indeed, though the spirit of reverence was deep at Windesheim, it never degenerated into rigorism, but was conjoined to a freedom and simplicity, and even to a tenderness of devotion such as ever characterizes those who give Our Lord a strong personal love, looking on Him as being truly the Friend and Bridegroom of souls. We read of John of Heusden that "he clung most closely and pondered most earnestly upon the things which might lead his soul to the love and knowledge of God . . . and seeking an effectual means he determined to keep the life and Passion of the Lord our God in his heart . . . so that he might be made worthy to have a perfect foretaste of the true gifts of His Love, and thereby perceive the yearnings of His wounded Heart and the depths thereof."

An instance of the tender and childlike spirit of confidence that pervades the teaching of Windesheim is found in the advice given by Brother Arnold Calcar to a novice, who in trouble and perplexity sought comfort from him: "'Most beloved Brother, the good Lord our God doth in very truth love thee; whether the light of His grace shine, or there be darkness in thine heart, whether things be sweet or drear, whether thou be comforted or desolate, in good report or in evil, He would have thee continue brave and even-minded, stable and unshaken; He would have thee constant for ever in essential and true devotion, and firm in the verity of the Faith; wherefore He hath urged thee to walk in this way, not relying on the sensible consciousness of a joy that may deceive. So a mother, seeking to teach her only son to walk alone, will set him with hands or arms resting upon a seat or settle; but she watcheth the little one when, losing hold thereof he would fall, and stretching out her arms taketh him again to her bosom. Even so, I say, doth God with the novice. He would lead him to high peaks of holiness and accustom the tenderness of his mind to food more solid, wherefore He seemeth to withdraw the hand of His comfort from such a one, but lest he fall by the way, God doth ever deign to pour out for him some new consolation and to strengthen him again upon the true path of life. For this cause be not over sad when thou seemest to be reft of the savour of divine sweetness and doubt not that more progress shall be the issue thereof for thee.' And with these words he let the brother go into his own cell well comforted."

Brother Arnold was often sought by those who needed spiritual counsel, for "he would not lead his brothers to dwell upon minute points or perplexities of conscience, but in mind, speech, and reasoning he was simple and clear. Indeed," adds the Chronicler, "neither the doctors of the Church nor our primitive Fathers were ever wont to lead timid consciences to complication and perplexity of mind by their discourse, as they openly show us in the writings they have left. Yet now there are some who are called Doctors, but interpret any petty matter (which in itself may be of the smallest moment and capable of being taken in any way one will) as being worthy of punishment, calling that a mortal sin, which of itself is known to be no sin, or only venial. Such persons by no means consider this, namely, that a man of good-will, steadfast in his good purpose and feeling in his heart that he is so disposed, would choose bodily death rather than commit a mortal sin, into which he cannot lightly fall, because thereby death cometh to the soul, which is of more worth essentially than a hundred bodies."

In 1423 there died at Windesheim a certain Brother John, who, though not a priest, may be truly said to have made the Holy Sacrifice the centre of his life. He was well versed in clerkly lore, and, indeed, specially learned in the Scripture. Yet he was far from desiring a high place in the house of God, "and," says the Chronicler, "despite his gifts he abode humbly in his little nest, keeping his cell and silence as he loved to do and thus continued to his life's end. Lifting himself above himself, he presented himself before God in purity of heart, and thus in sweet exultation he saw clearly with the inward eyes of his mind, what is the glory of the Saints, and the homeland where the court of heaven rejoiceth, and looking upon the King conferring His rewards in glory, himself had foretaste thereof.

"After this manner he was renewed every day by dwelling in the brightness of the Saints, and refreshed by these true delights of soul, inward visions, desires and longings. Wherefore, all his soul being illumined by divine light through the grace of the Holy Ghost, rejoiced in the presence of God, for gladness of spirit and wonderment at His ineffable goodness, and the mighty benefits He conferred upon one so little; and that soul burst forth into thanksgiving, and cried aloud every day in prayer: 'O Father most loving, O God Immeasurable, may Thy sweet, venerable, and blessed name be magnified in my heart, the hearts of all men and in every creature, for Thou art worthy of all praise, honour, and reverence. Thou, O Lord, art the God of mercy and pity and sweetness, and what can I say to Thee? For Thou art the Fount and Spring of all goodness and all virtue, wherefore all praise and honour do beseem Thee.' Thus would he pray and so taught others to pray.

"He rejoiced to abide in his cell and be occupied with God, for he made of that place an earthly paradise (*cellam fecit coelum*) by meditating upon celestial things, for he bore God about with him in his heart, and he perceived that the Holy Ghost and a company of Angels were with him within that cell when he did what those Angels do in heaven, namely, know, love, and see God, have joy in Him, and have leisure for Him alone; for the truth is everywhere at hand for them that have power to enjoy it.

"When the bell was rung for Mass he would take his place among the lay brothers and kneel with his hands covering his face, and so gave himself devoutly to holy thoughts and contemplation. At times he was rapt in a state of ecstasy at the thought of the greatness, glory, praise, and majesty of God, particularly at High Mass, for then, as he considered His infinite goodness in saving mankind and His endless mercy, he was set afire and melted by the thought, because by reason of the bodily presence of Christ in that Sacrament he had knowledge and foretaste of immeasurable sweetness and joy of heart. Then did he unite his own soul by love to that unquenchable fire of divine love for man which burned upon the altar, and with the inward eyes of his mind saw and apprehended the eternal, loving, and true God. For He was there present in His Body in glory and majesty, accompanied by multitudes of Angels, beholding His worshipper, hearing and loving him as though forgetful of all else in heaven and earth, and attending to him only, and crying from the holy altar: 'My son John, I made thee, I became Man and redeemed thee; and now I have come down from heaven to thee in exile to be thy comfort, to make satisfaction for thy sins, and to hear thy prayers; to bestow My grace upon thee, and to confer My heavenly glory on thee for ever. If thou wilt put away all created things and the love thereof, and wilt truly love, imitate, and serve Me, if thou wilt bear Me in thy heart and make room for My boundless benefits in thy bosom, that glory shall be thine.'

"Inasmuch as he pondered these and like things, what marvel is it if he was enkindled and set afire by each incident in the life and Passion of Jesus Christ, as fully as though he stood beneath, yea, and hung upon the very Cross with Him? In mind he entered through the gaping wounds into His very Heart; and joining his own thereto he washed himself from all his sins in the Blood of the Lord; he was himself wounded by the fiery arrows of charity, and had knowledge of that ardent love that had loved him from all eternity.

"Thus it was that he passed through all his nights and days devoutly and in spiritual gladness and most readily resigned his whole self with all things in his power to the perfect will and good pleasure of God, for only who hath tried it doth know what it is to love Jesus and to ruminate in all devoutness on His most holy Passion. Then, as doth Holy Church, he would pray for the living and the dead, asking that the saving Oblation might win grace for the righteous, pardon for sinners, and glory for the Blessed and the Saints.

"Thus he carried with him the devotion he had conceived at the Mass, and by words, example, and behaviour showed that he walked, as it were, in another world that is eternal in the heavens."

When this holy man died after forty years in the Monastery of Windesheim, one of the elder Brothers saw in a vision that his soul was detained for three hours in purgatory and thence came forth "like the morning star, and growing brighter yet, even as the sun shining at his strength, ascended fair and lovely to heaven to share for ever the glory of the face of God." So great was the opinion of his holiness that the Chronicler, far from marvelling at the revelation of his speedy admittance to the joys of heaven, seems rather to wonder that such a one " should have been held back so long from their full fruition. . . ."

It is noticeable that in these accounts of the pious exercises of contemplatives in the later years of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century there is more than one mention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus . . . of entering into its depths, perceiving its yearnings, and uniting our hearts to that wounded Heart; and in a work published in 1494 by a Canon Regular of Mount St Agnes, we again meet with passages which seem to anticipate the devotion as understood and practised in the Church since the great revelation made to St Margaret Mary in 1675.

In his *Rosetum Exercitiorum Spiritualium* we find Brother John Mauburnus expressing his ardent devotion to the Heart of Jesus in words borrowed from the Canticle of Canticles, speaking of it as wounded by one glance of the spouse, melting like wax in the consuming flames of charity, saddened for us . . . and for us pierced by the lance; he invokes it as the Holy of Holies, the precious casket wherein are contained the names of God's chosen ones, and he prays that his own heart may be wounded by the love of the divine Heart.*

Apart from the fact that Our Lord is ever ready to reveal the secrets of His love to those whose whole life is an eager seeking for close union with Him, there are circumstances which would make us expect to find indications of devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Congregation of Windesheim. The Canons assiduously studied the works of St Bernard, whose love for the Heart of Jesus there pours itself out in words of wonderful eloquence and beauty. Moreover, Gerard the Great had spent three years studying the spiritual life in the Carthusian Monastery at Arnhem, where Henry of Kalkar, to whom he owed his conversion, was Prior. It is one of the glories of the Order of St Bruno that from its earliest days devotion to the Sacred Heart has ever flourished in it. The names of Henry of Kalkar (1328-1408), Ludolph of Saxony, and Lanspergius are indissolubly connected with the history of its development, and it would be strange indeed if, in his conferences with his spiritual son, Henry of Kalkar had not initiated him into the secrets of a devotion that Gerard was so capable of appreciating and of transmitting to his own disciples.

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* O Cor Divinum {
Tanquam cera liquescens uno cerne (crine) et oculo sponsae vulneratum.
Propter nos contristatum, et militari lancea vulneratum.
Vere sanctum sanctorum, armarium vitae portans nomina filiorum.

Tua cor meum vulnera charitate.—*Rosetum*, fol. cl.

See an article entitled "La Méditation méthodique et Jean Mauburnus," by Père Watrigant, which appeared in the January number (1923) of *La Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*. In the *Rosetum* we also find some of the earliest evidence regarding another devotion, only popularized centuries later; on p. 198 Mauburnus thus invokes the Holy Heart of Mary:

Cor {
Piissimum amore liquefactum.
Dominicis necessitatibus invigilans, etc.
Charitate vulneratum; charitatis exemplum.

Later on we shall find their spiritual descendants among the first to welcome the devotion when Our Lord entrusted its propagation in His Church to a humble daughter of the Visitation; and surely the children of St Augustine should enter into the devotion of the Sacred Heart as into their natural inheritance, for perhaps none has ever penetrated so far into the abyss of love of which the Heart of Jesus is the symbol, as he who cries out boldly in his Confessions: "I know that I love Thee, Thou hast wounded my heart, and I have fallen in love with Thee" (Book X).

Before passing on to another subject mention must be made of a custom with regard to the cultus of the Blessed Sacrament, still observed in the Monasteries which owe their origin to Windesheim. All those who are acquainted with the history of the popular devotions during Mass will remember the importance attached in the Middle Ages to "looking upon the Lord's Body" at the moment of the elevation. This custom is said to have arisen from the desire of the faithful to show their belief in the Real Presence attacked by the heresy of Berengarius, and thus to make reparation to Our Lord's outraged honour.*

In the resolutions of Gerard the Great, written probably about 1374, we read: "From the *Sanctus* onward prepare to look upon the Host—are not all men wont to make preparation before looking upon their King, by whom also they must be seen? After this make thyself ready for the reception and do naught besides, for at that time the presence of Christ doth work upon thee and doth help thy weakness. . . . Also always draw so near to the priest as thy condition doth permit to hear the Mass, and to look upon the Host, and stand in the presence thereof."*

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* Or it may be the result of a theological discussion of the last years of the twelfth century, when some advanced the opinion that the bread was not transubstantiated until the wine also was consecrated. It is said that as a protest against this error the Host was raised immediately after the consecration and the custom of ringing the bell and of torch-bearers was introduced.

In the Constitutions of Windesheim we read: "At the elevation of Christ's Body all adore, reverently kneeling, and then bow profoundly till the elevation of the holy Chalice, when all again erect themselves and adore profoundly as before. When warned by the sound of the bell, those not present in the choir shall kneel during the elevation of the most Holy Sacrament (if they conveniently can) wheresoever they be, and give themselves earnestly to prayer."†

The practice of striking thrice a bell hung outside the church in a small turret, so that its sound might be heard at some distance, dates from the thirteenth century. Bishop Hedley,‡ writing of the introduction of this custom into England, says: "When its sound was heard, boys at Eton and St Paul's stopped their lessons to pray, labourers in the fields bent their heads in memory and reverence. Within the church a special bell was rung, called the 'sacring bell,' and torches were lighted. . . . To quote from *The Lay Folk's Mass Book :*

"When time is of ye sacring,
  A little bell men used to ring,
Then shalt thou do reverence
  To Jesus Christ's own presence
That may loose all baleful bands;
  Kneeling hold up both thy hands.
And so the elevation thou behold
  For this is He whom Judas sold."

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* *Founders of the New Devotion*, by Thomas à Kempis. Translated into English by J. P. Arthur (Kegan Paul and Co).

† "Ad elevationem Corporis Christi, in genibus cuncti omni reverentia adoramus, et mox capite ad terram prosternimur, donec ad elevationem calicis sancti, iterum erecti, similiter adoremus. Qui in choro presentes non aderunt, ubicumque fuerint (si commode possunt) infra elevationem Sanctissimi Sacramenti, per sonum campanae admoniti, genua flectentes, orationi studiosius incumbunt" (cap. iv Qualiter Fratres habere se debent in Missa Conventuali).

‡ *The Holy Eucharist* (Longmans, Green and Co.).

Father Thurston wrote a series of articles on the history of the Elevation which appeared in the *Tablet* in October and November, 1907. They were translated for the *Revue du Clergé français* in 1908 (Juin-Juillet).

It would be interesting to illustrate from the Constitutions of Windesheim many of the older practices of devotion and liturgical forms, but it would be beyond our present purpose, which is but to give some examples of the deep devotion to the most Holy Sacrament of the altar ever manifested in the Congregation, and worthily voiced by Thomas à Kempis in the Fourth Book of the *Imitation*.

The time was to come when the traditions of Windesheim would be carried on by those who had proved by willingness to sacrifice fortune, country, and even life itself, that to them it was indeed "the Mass that mattered."

VII

MYSTICAL WRITERS OF THE SCHOOL OF WINDESHEIM

(Henry Mande and Gerlac Petersen)

Henry Mande, one of the most remarkable contemplatives of the Windesheim Congregation, has been called "the Ruysbroeck of the North," so closely does he follow in the footsteps of the great Mystic of Brabant. He was born at Dordrecht in 1360, and in his youth was secretary to William, Count of Ostrevant, who became Count of Holland and Hainault in 1404.* Life held pleasant prospects for the young man who, says the Chronicler, "was loved and accepted by all"; but the preaching of Gerard Groote and Florentius pricked him to the heart, and he began to realize that he was called to higher things than earth could give him. A sharp struggle ensued, for he greatly feared to tear himself away from the delights of the world, its honours and riches; but God who designed to raise this soul to such close union with Himself, drew him powerfully away from all that held him back from his high vocation. "Our Lord appeared visibly before him at many times, and in divers places, both within and without, in his house, the Church and elsewhere. The Lord came in human form, nailed upon the Cross, and showed His Blood newly shed from the five wounds, thus testifying openly what He had borne upon his behalf and the nature and vastness of His sufferings by means of these same stigmata that are the signs of His true love and of His bodily presence. These things the Lord did that Henry might no longer delay to turn continually to Him, with all his heart, and in some sort repay the ardour of His love: and by these gifts of our Redemption was Henry Mande often moved to tears, and feeling that the presence of

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* William VI was grandson of the Princess Margaret, sister to Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III, and he married Margaret of Burgundy, sister to Jean Sans Peur. Their daughter was the famous Jacqueline of Bavaria.

God was with him, he perceived that all visible things which are delightful to the flesh had suddenly been made most bitter, whilst those that are contrary to the flesh and displeasing to the world had been made sweet beyond the sweetness of honey and the honeycomb. So now the love of Christ grew hot within him, and leaving the world with all the delights thereof, he came to Deventer to be henceforward the servant of God for ever.

"Here he was received by Florentius and his brothers in kindly wise, and, having held converse with them for some while, he was sent to Windesheim, where he was invested with Brother Reyner, and made his profession."

For some reason which is not explained, he never became a Choir Brother, but remained an Oblate or Donate of the Order; we know that about this time the profession of Gerlac Petersen was put off because he was so short-sighted that he could not see to read the choir-books from afar. The Prior John of Heusden and another Brother spent their spare time writing out a special Antiphonary and Gradual for his use, so that to the joy of all he was able to receive his investiture. But Henry Mande could certainly have provided books for himself, for he was "a good and quick craftsman in illuminating books, and for thirty years was our best painter and draughtsman for the adorning of the capital letters of the Missals, Bibles, and Chant Books." Possibly his health may have been an impediment, for he was sometimes confined for months to his bed, suffering acutely from various infirmities, and on such occasions "he would give thanks to God with heart and voice, as though his pains were singular and great treasures sent to him from heaven, in special sign of favour, from the hand of a most loving Father." When he grew better he would spend all the day in constant prayer, and the faithful fulfilment of his task of illuminating books, and his abstinence was such that though he was a man of mighty frame and lofty stature, he would sustain his bodily strength often for a whole week "upon one manchet or roll of white bread and little else besides."

His talk was never upon worldly matters, but he would speak of God and His love and the life of the soul with so much unction that the younger Brethren, "yea, and the middle aged also, who wished to go forward in spiritual exercises, would swarm about him," says the

Chronicle, "like bees in quest of honey during the hours of recreation and the time of relaxation.* And he would stand in the midst in loving wise, giving answers and counsels, as if he could see clearly the heart of every one of them, and knew it to a nicety, wherefore they took away no little comfort of soul."

We cannot wonder that this holy man had the gift of thus comforting souls, for his own interior life was intense, and "he was often caught up in spirit and beheld the glory of the Son of God and His saints in heaven, and dwelling, through their frequent revelations, upon the things that are above, he described the glory of heaven and the inhabitants thereof, and foretold, moreover, what should be in time to come." But these favours had been won by his complete surrender of himself to God, not only in his excessive physical sufferings, but also in great tribulations of soul, whereby he shared in Christ's agony and dereliction.

A very beautiful story is told of an apparition of the Child Jesus, which must be given in the words of the Chronicler, who knew Henry Mande personally: "Once this Brother Henry was walking near the gate of the Monastery, and there he saw a most fair child sitting within the gate; so he took him up in his arms and said: 'Fair Child, tell me how thou art called?' But the Child replied sweetly: 'I am called Lamb'; then said Henry: 'But who brought thee hither?' And the Child made answer: 'This is My Father's House and these are My Brethren . . .' and so saying leapt from his arms and vanished out of his sight; wherefore the Brother perceived that this was indeed the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father most High, and being filled with exceeding gladness of heart, he rejoiced in the Lord with thanksgiving."

Sometimes the souls of the departed would appear to him and tell him of their state; thus, after the death of Master John Cele, who had been Gerard Groote's companion in that memorable visit to Blessed John Ruysbroeck in the Green Valley, while the body of the deceased still lay on a bier awaiting burial, his soul appeared to Henry and told him that it had entered heaven without passing through purgatory. Such knowledge was generally communicated during the Holy Sacrifice, to which his devotion was so great that he could never assist at it without shedding abundant tears of contrition and love, so that, particularly when he received the Blessed Eucharist, "his garment and the pavement of the Choir were bedewed therewith." John Busch tells how he once celebrated Mass in Henry's chamber during an illness. "On the day of Christ's Nativity I celebrated before him, using a movable altar, and having heard his confession I gave him Communion. But as he sat upon his bed hearing Mass, he wept abundantly and sighed as was his wont; and as we sat at meat afterwards he told me the vision which he had seen during the celebration; he had been caught up in spirit, he said, and had his part of heavenly things; for he saw with the eyes of his understanding divers matters that were of true comfort and consolation, and among these Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and chief Priest of the Church, celebrating in heaven with Peter the Apostle as Deacon, and John the Evangelist as Sub-deacon; at seeing whom he did exult in spirit. With them were the souls of two, or it may be three, Sisters of the House of Canonesses Regular, that were now dead, and these were most gloriously apparelled and in great gladness; but elsewhere he saw the souls of two other departed Sisters who were still held in the bitter pains of purgatory, for they were not yet wholly free.

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* The times so called in the Constitutions are a survival of the custom which prevailed in the old Orders that four times a year, at the seasons for "blood-letting," the Rules of silence should be relaxed and "somewhat better fare" than usual should be provided. These Recreations are also still observed in the great Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln, founded in the ninth century.

"Now this was a great marvel, but I believe it was a gift conferred on him by divine grace; for many religious men and women and also seculars used to come and ask him questions concerning the state of their parents and others that were departed, desiring to know where their souls might be, and whether they could be helped in any wise. Wherefore, at the time of his devotion during Mass or in the night, he would first of all betake himself to God, and then meditate in silence, and as the fruit of his devotion, sighs, and unwearied tears, he saw in a vision and revelation that was wont to come the state of them about whom he had been asked. So in the morning or after Mass, when he came to himself, he could answer each one in all confidence, saying: 'It is well with them,' or else: 'It is ill with them,' and he would show in what manner their souls could be holpen, as for example by Masses, the thirty days' observance, vigils, the recitation of psalms, alms to the poor, and so forth."

Henry was wont to record his spiritual experiences, both his temptations and their remedies and the favours conferred on him, his frequent visions and "the comforts of mind which he had from Christ, His Mother, and the Holy Angels, yet he always spoke as if these things happened to another Brother that was sitting with him in his cell, intent on contemplation."

The most remarkable of his visions is that called his "Apocalypse," which he recounts as follows:

"In the sweet and beloved Name of Our Lord Jesus and His holy Mother the Blessed Virgin.

"On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary a certain poor little Brother at Windesheim was sitting in his cell in the morning after Prime, and it was about the sixth hour. He lifted up his heart to God because of what was given him by His special grace, and being caught up in the spirit into a tranquillity, peace, and silence that passeth understanding, he forgot himself and all things else, and in this tranquillity and peace, he heard a sound most sweet, that far surpassed all the joys of this world, and with the inward eye of his understanding, he saw the manner in which God hath pleasure of Himself, in Himself and in all created things, and that He is His own joy and glory above all things that are made. This he apprehended according to a fashion unspeakable, for he perceived an image and similitude, but no form therewith; and when he did rejoice, because his heart had this delight, wherein he desired to abide for ever (because he found that all his powers of sense were thereby made perfect), he heard a voice most gentle, as of a harp that sounded sweetly, saying: 'Go forth and see the Queen of Heaven in her glory to which she hath been taken up by the Most High.' Forthwith his inward eyes were opened and he saw a countless multitude of Angels, for no creature of earth may number them, and their tale is known to God only. All these were robed in brightness unspeakable, according as God has appointed his portion for each, and all poured forth the sweetest strains of divers melodies, which the heart of man may not comprehend, save those to whom understanding hath been given from above. To God they offered endless thanksgiving, and praised Him for that most excellent glory and brightness that are conferred upon His most loving and Blessed Mother, and shall be undimmed for evermore.

"Then saw he those that had belonged to divers saintly Orders and manners of life, of whom there were a vast number beyond understanding in their multiformity. Each was clad in his own virtue and the merit acquired in life, but the brightness of the least of them goeth far beyond the comprehension of any human creature. But besides the raiment of their own deserving, they wore the special beauty of the merits of our Lord Jesus which is borne by all the elect to their salvation, by reason of His humanity. All were crowned with golden crowns that shone like the sun in his strength, yet some were more glorious than others, for the crown of each one was bright in proportion to his virtues and desert. All then did go together in procession, chanting this response: 'Happy art thou, Holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of every praise,' and it seemed as if all heaven itself were singing. Afterwards he saw the very Queen of glory with all her virgins, each according to her own deserving and holiness of life, but she the most beloved Lady, Mother of God, even the Virgin Mary, was clad, as it were, with a jewel beyond price, of such exceeding brightness that every Saint could see by her vesture how far her merits exceeded those of every one of them. She was crowned with a crown most precious that illumined all heaven, and above it was a fair garland, woven gloriously with three kinds of flowers, blue, white, and scarlet, which set forth to those who saw her three graces: divine Contemplation, special Chastity, and true Patience, in which she surpassed all mankind.

"And next he saw our kindly Father Augustine walking in great glory with all the Apostles, Martyrs, and Confessors, each being forever in that station in which he had been set of God. Then he saw how Augustine held with one hand Gerard Groote, and with the other John Vos of Heusden, who was once our Prior, and the Saint was glad because of them. And with John of Heusden there were all his Brothers, Canons Regular, and departed members of the whole Order and General Chapter, each robed in glory and brightness according to his deserving."

Henry Mande here gives the names of many whom he thus saw "in golden raiment, which is divine Charity," and upon their mantles were woven in wondrous wise the figures of those to whom they had done good in this life: thus on the vesture of Gerard the Great were figures of all who, by his example and preaching, were turned to sound doctrine and holiness; on the mantle of Florentius were the Canons Regular of Windesheim, whose Order had begun to flourish by his means, and Prior John of Heusden bore on his the figures of all his subjects whom he had moved to better things by his precept and example. The Sisters of Diepenveen he saw also in glory that may not be told, and he mentions some in particular, and among them a "certain maiden named Christina of Stavria, who was now rejoicing greatly because she had served in her life in the kitchen"; and in this procession of the Sisters of the Order each one was robed according to the perfection of fervour and charity she had attained in this world. And the virgins sang with sweetest voices the hymn: *Jesu Corona Virginum*.

"These and many like things did that Brother see; but afterwards, when they had gone in procession before the throne of glory, our Lord Jesus Christ took His Mother and set her upon the throne with Himself. Then lifted He up His voice and all the Court of Heaven sang with Him this Antiphon: 'Hail, Mary, Jewel of Purity, from whom shone forth the Sun of Righteousness upon the world; hail, pious Mother of Christian people, lead thy children for succour to that Son who is the King of Angels; Virgin who art the comfort of the desolate, the hope and kindly Mother of the fatherless, succour thy children,' and so forth.

"Now this procession which he saw, and in presence whereof he stood in spirit, was so great and beautiful that no man could describe it, and the vision thereof endured from the sixth hour of the morning until the evening, or longer. But besides this he saw with his inward eyes the secret places of heaven, and the infinite glory thereof which words cannot unfold, nor can it be described under any similitude, because, as he perceived, all that has been written concerning the things of heaven and God are altogether nothing compared with the verity of these; and to him it seemed that he could better praise the glory and beauty, the delight and gladness that he saw, by silence than by any words soever that should strive to express them, wherefore he said in his heart: 'O quam beati sunt qui habitant in domo tua Domine, in saecula saeculorum laudabunt te.'"

Henry goes on to tell how some of those whom he saw "spake kindly to him, but," he adds, "it would be a long task to set forth all they said." He gives, however, the discourse addressed to him by Prior John and Florentius. "'See, most beloved Brother,' they said, 'how doth it hurt these now that they patiently endured mocking, abjection, and contempt, reproaches also, infirmities, temptations, and divers burdens that were laid upon them by God and man? Doth it now hurt them that they died a thousand deaths in slaying their own will and mortifying the flesh? Lo, now do they rejoice over the days of their humiliation and the years wherein they suffered adversity. See and consider the glory that is here, as also the delights and unspeakable joys of this heavenly country, for to this end were they revealed to thee, namely, that thou mightest show them to our Brothers and Sisters, that they may hasten with more eager desire to attain them. Some are lukewarm and walk in the way of God with weariness; some put their trust in things external, and utterly desert the inward virtue and the piety which is profitable to all things; some again do waste themselves by giving overmuch heed to outward and earthly matters, being set fixedly upon their own wisdom, as though God had not the power to nurture His own sons. . . . Consider now, most beloved Brother, how vain and foolish are they who neglect and lose this endless glory for the sake of that little time in which they follow their own concupiscences and delights. . . . But these things are shown thee that thou mayest in turn show them, if perchance any that are of this kind may be led to amend, and they that are fervent may become more fervent still, for the end of all things is at hand, but do thou look to thyself and strive earnestly to possess thy soul in patience.'

"This was the end of this vision, but then the Brother, having come to himself, wept very bitterly because he must still abide here, yet he ever kept before his eyes the remembrance of the things he had seen.

"Blessed be God in His gifts, both in this present time and in eternity. Amen."

Henry died a few months after this vision in the thirty-seventh year of his religious life; we have no details regarding his death, but it occurred in 1431, and he left his brethren convinced of his great holiness and of the truth of his revelations. John Busch tells us how St Lydwina declared her belief in them: "Amongst other devout books," he says, " Henry composed a little treatise in the vulgar tongue which he sent by my hand to the virgin Lidewey who was wonderfully afflicted by long sickness and many pains for thirty-eight years, for now she lay sick in Schiedam, and he desired that it might be read before her. During her last years this Lidewey had scarce any organs that were whole, yet for many years God visited her with divine comfort, visions, and revelations, and she was mightily consoled by divine raptures. This book, therefore, which I took her, she thankfully received, and spoke to me many sweet words concerning God, which were filled with all charity; amongst other things, when I made mention of Brother Henry Mande, and asked her to tell me what she thought of his visions, she said: ' I believe that his visions and holy revelations are altogether from God.' "

Henry Mande wrote fourteen books concerning the spiritual life and contemplation; three of these have been edited. In the *Book of the Three States of a Converted Man*, instead of the usual terms " purgative, illuminative, and unitive," he names the three stages, the " active," the " inner," and the " contemplative." A few of the titles of his books will give an idea of the trend of his thought: *Of the secret things of our Lord Jesus Christ and the seven ways that lead thereto; A loving and plaintive plea of the loving soul to its God for deliverance from darkness and her own defects; A brief conference of the loving soul with her Beloved; Concerning raptures and Communion with God, and of God Himself*, etc.

" All these books," says the Chronicle, " are written upon vellum and in the vulgar tongue, being fairly inscribed in his own hand. He left them, as was fitting, to the library of books in his own language at Windesheim, to be there kept and lent of our charity to all the Brothers who should ask for them, and to strangers likewise."

Another typical representative of the mystical School of Windesheim was Gerlac Petersen, whose *Fiery Soliloquy with God* is, perhaps, after the *Imitation*, the best-known of the works written by members of the Congregation.

Gerlac was a contemporary of Henry Mande and of Thomas à Kempis, to whom he has been often likened. He was born in Deventer in 1378, and frequented the school of the Brothers of the Common Life, of which Florentius was Rector, where he must have been a companion in studies of the young à Kempis, for their age differed by but two years.

Gerlac was singularly loved by Florentius on account of his great purity and gentleness. As a boy he had been chosen because " he was fair of face and goodly to look upon," to represent Our Lady in one of the Mystery Plays then so popular, and it was during its performance on the feast of the Purification that he made a vow of chastity; only his Master, Florentius, whose leave he had obtained, knew what was passing in the boy's heart and how " it was kindled with love " as he enacted the part of the Queen of Virgins carrying her Son to be presented in the Temple. All through his life his purity seems to have shone on his exterior. " It was manifest to all who saw him," says the Chronicler, " that the Holy Spirit dwelt within him. He was of somewhat lofty stature, serene like an Angel in countenance, quiet in bearing, gentle in speech, and besides these externals he had those good gifts that lay secretly within him. . . . Justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost . . . for in his heart he bore Jesus, and a Temple prepared to receive the glory of the Trinity. . . . How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that hope in Thee ! Nothing that may be desired in this world may be compared with this peace," and he ends by exclaiming, " What shall come to such men in their own country if there be such abundance of delight upon the way !"

It was only in 1403 that Gerlac made his profession at Windesheim, whither he had been sent by Florentius, for though " our Brothers loved him more than all the clerks for his virtues," yet his investiture was delayed for a short time on account of his short-sightedness; we have seen in the life of Henry Mande how this difficulty was overcome and his profession was a great joy to all. From the time of his entrance his gifts had been apparent; " he was," we read, " divinely illumined by the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and also vehemently enkindled to knowledge of himself, love of God, striving after truth, and contemplation of heavenly things; for he, more than all the Brothers, was rapt in ecstasy and knew a marvellous clarity of vision and the sweetness thereof. Thus he made progress every day in matters so divine and exercises so holy, and this not after the common manner of clerks, but by the special gift of God. . . . What manner of man he strove to show himself in the religious life, before God and men, is shown by a book which he wrote. This doth testify how his mind did pass by all visible things and every creature, and how with enkindled love he contemplated the Sovereign Good, Eternal Truth, Wisdom, and Righteousness, setting himself in the sight of the unchangeable God outside the conditions of time, place, and external appearance. The said book is entitled: *The Soliloquy of a Regular who striveth continually to set his thoughts upon the One Supreme Good, turning away from complexity of heart.** And the beginning is this: 'In the spirit of lowliness, and with a broken and humble heart, and as the dust under foot and lower than Heaven, earth, and all things that are therein, we fall down before Thee; even as some poor little lamb or lonely wandering chicken, we take refuge beneath Thy wings, and ask that we may be ever received by Thee in mercy, O most gracious Father!' This he composed at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and for the use of his own devotion in the Religious Life, and he wrote it upon parchment folded in four or upon loose sheets. . . ."

Another work of Gerlac's called the *Breviloquium* must have been written when he was only twenty-five, for it was composed before his Profession. Some beautiful sayings of his are recorded; thus, in times of adversity, he would say: "The Lord our God yet liveth," and to himself he would address these words: "Keep silence; yield, bow thyself," and "Hasten to be made perfect; to-morrow thou shalt be called."

A letter to his sister, who was Procuratrix at Gerard Groote's House in Deventer, begins thus: "To a man who is truly spiritual, no time is so short but that he can unite himself to His Beloved therein."

The Chronicler heaps up words to express the height of virtue and sublimity of contemplation to which Gerlac had attained: "This Brother Gerlac was wholly turned to God, illumined in understanding, and in pure affection set afire by charity; being duly collected in mind, he forgot those things which are behind and reached forward continually to those that are before; with his feet he trod the earth, but in thought he dwelt in heaven. . . . His mind was ever rapt to contemplation and the fruition of God, wherefore he showed every sign of purity and holiness, because he could not rest upon any worldly thing upon this side God, nor find any repose for his soul save in the one sovereign Good, the True, the Eternal, the Unchanging. . . . Therefore he put all things after this quest, he broke down the particular and transcended the universal, thus attaining with a mind made pure to the Infinite Good. This is shown by his writings and not by pen and ink alone, but even better by his life."

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* The oldest Latin edition appeared at Cologne in 1616 (I. Kinck) with the title, *Alter Thomas à Kempis; sive ignitum soliloquium Gerlaci Petri Daventriensis;* "The second Thomas à Kempis, or the Fervent Soliloquy with God, of Gerlach Peters of Deventer." It has been translated into Dutch, French, German, and English. An English edition of *The Fiery Soliloquy with God* by a secular Priest was published by Richardson in 1872, of which a revised edition has been issued by Burns Oates and Washbourne in the "Spiritual Series."

Gerlac was for some time Sacristan at Windesheim, and he used to say that this office was more holy than all other duties of obedience, because he who has this charge is most often occupied about the divine Mysteries and has opportunity thereby to cleave more closely to the things of God. It gave him, moreover, the privilege of remaining in the Choir when the Brethren left it after the Divine Office, and then, alone with God, he would give free vent to the love which had flamed up in his heart during the singing of the Psalms and Canticles, even by words and signs. When the *Te Deum* or *Magnificat* was chanted he was sometimes so uplifted in soul that one might see how his feet scarce touched the floor, and that he was caught up in spirit.

" During the solemnities of the Mass and the Divine Office, this holy soul rejoiced in the presence of his Spouse, grew fervent with desire, hot with love, and afire with yearning, through which exceeding emotion of mind the soul itself seemed to uplift the body. In his rejoicing he rejoiced in the Lord, not being able to contain himself for gladness, and his mortified body seemed to have part in the influx of the Divine goodness, whereof the spirit had abundance, so that he said with the Psalmist: ' My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire doth flame forth,' and ' My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.'

" He loved to be alone and busied with holy things, for then his heart being free and released from outward hindrances, he went into the presence of God, whom he studied and desired to see, perceive, understand, and enjoy; for all his might and spiritual exercises were directed to this end.

"It was a sign of his deep humility and true progress that a man so enlightened and one of such inward clearness of vision should, after entering religion, have knelt at the feet of a simple clerk and besought instruction in behaviour and conversation, and this he often did. . . . Yet none of the Brothers could discourse so clearly upon the things of heaven as he, for he spoke as one who had often walked in the chambers and was well known in the courts thereof. . . . He stood constantly before the throne of the glory of God and the seat of the Blessed Trinity, for he felt the Lord present in his heart, and the revelation of that presence he enjoyed with all gladness, presenting himself before Him and the hosts of Angels in loving jubilation of heart. As a man truly spiritual and heavenly, he climbed on high, and with his inner vision and affection did often behold the angelic Choirs as he walked there; moreover, Angels often came to visit him here when his mind was intent upon devotion and doing on earth what they do in heaven, namely, loving God, praising Him, and rejoicing in His presence."

But God was to perfect this holy soul, as He ever perfects His elect, in the furnace of suffering. We have seen how Henry Mande looked on his bodily pains as "singular and great treasures"; so, too, Brother Gerlac, struck down in his youth by an infirmity which caused intense physical suffering, embraced this trial with thanksgiving and directed all his affections and devout exercises to this end, namely, to make as great progress in patience and true thankfulness as he had made heretofore, in wisdom and divine contemplation.

John Busch also regards the terrible sufferings of the friend he so loved and admired as a special sign of God's favour: "Inasmuch," he says, "as Gerlac yielded the blossoms of every virtue, especially purity of heart and divine contemplation, God desired to reward this faithful servant plenteously in patience and the mortification of self."

Gerlac, in all humility, accepted his grievous pains as an expiation of all that in him was displeasing to God, and gave himself up to exercises of compunction, beseeching the Lord to wash him clean in the laver of penance and so to purify him in this life, that he might go straight to his God, saying with our Father Augustine: "Now, O Lord, rend, now burn." "So," says the Chronicle, "the Lord gave consent to his desire and, as a good and kindly Father, was willing to teach him in merciful wise how to take possession of his heritage . . . wherefore He purged his soul even as gold is tried in the fire . . . and the nearer he came to the end the more intense and grievous anguish was heaped upon him, so that the avenging fire to come might find the less dross to purge away, seeing that through his own will he had already passed through the flames of cleansing in this life. . . . The agony was sometimes no less than if all his limbs had been torn from their sockets by the rack, yet all the while and despite the torture he continued his thanksgiving, believing that God is not wont to give such gifts save to His most beloved friends. . . . The might of this exceeding pain was overcome by the power of his inward love; and once, when the torture of his purgation was most intense, a novice, whose Master he was, stood by him and wept in loving compassion, but Gerlac said: 'Grieve not, most beloved Brother, nor weep for me, because although my pains and torments seem almost to surpass the bearing of my human weakness, yet if I knew that it would promote the honour of God and the well-being of thy soul, I would be content to bear them all again.'

"So he went on from pang to pang, from suffering to suffering, exulting in the fire of pain, but when it slackened a little he would say: 'A wicked servant of His Lord ought thus to be chastised, that being so corrected he may learn to fulfil His will.'

"Now, as hath been said, he kept his treatises upon spiritual exercises in his cell and they were written upon parchments and loose sheets, wherefore he asked our Prior, John of Heusden, of his kindness to gather these together in the cell and burn them, for he had designed them for his own devotion and not for others; but the Father answered him in kindly wise: 'Most beloved Brother, entrust this matter to me; I will dispose of the writings as is best.' Being at the very last and fortified by the Sacraments of the Church, he besought the Brothers near him again and again to make the signal of the dying forthwith, and to call the Brothers of the Community together for his departure, since he felt that death was hard at hand; but they did not think that death was very near and put off making the signal. So this servant of God perceived that in his last moment he would be without the presence of his beloved Brothers, yet he insisted no more, nor perturbed his mind by urging the need to call them, but like a simple, obedient and well-disciplined learner, humbly submitted to the ordinance of God and the will of his brothers; thus he was obedient even unto death.

" So, with his arms at his side, with folded hands and bowed head, he slept in peace, happily finishing his life in true obedience and holy patience. After the solemn rites were done, his remains were buried before the door of the Choir with devotion and due honour by the Brothers.

" He had lived in the Order for nearly eight years, and being made perfect, he fulfilled a long time in a brief space and entered into the unending joys of God. Although to human understanding he be dead in the body, yet he liveth for us every day in his lively example and the devout exercises in the books which he wrote: and our desire is to imitate him in Spirit and in Truth."

Thus ends the account of one who, by his angelic purity and wonderful gift of contemplation, seems to exemplify the words of the Gospel: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

VIII

THOMAS À KEMPIS

CANON REGULAR OF MOUNT ST AGNES

ON the feast of the Annunciation of the year 1398, four of Gerard Groote's disciples received the habit of the Canons Regular in a Monastery dedicated to St Agnes, which was incorporated into the Chapter of Windesheim at Easter of the same year. Never, perhaps, was a house begun in greater poverty and humility, " but," says the Chronicler, "Jesus our Saviour Himself began in the deepest poverty, and His lack did make rich Holy Church."

A blind unlettered man, John of Ummen, was the chief promoter of the foundation; touched by the preaching of Gerard the Great, he had gathered around him a few others, who, like himself, sought earnestly " to take hold on the new life in Christ which Gerard taught." They desired to live remote from the world and they begged him, " as loving sons speaking to their father, to condescend to go with them some little space outside the city of Zwolle to look for a place convenient to live quietly."

So at early dawn the next day the Master led them forth till at about an hour's walk from the town they came to a hilly tract, known as the Mountains of Nemel, where it seemed to them that they would find the seclusion they sought; it was a wild, barren place, only thorns and nettles growing here and there on the hillsides, and it was seldom that anyone passed that way.

Master Gerard saw that on the south side was a place fit for crops, and he said to them that stood by: " Pitch your tabernacle at the foot of this mountain; then shall ye be able to make a little garden for your herbs and fruits on the level place towards the south. If the Lord grant me life I will be often here with you."*

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* The Chronicle quoted in this sketch is always that of Mount St Agnes, written by Thomas à Kempis, and translated into English by J. P. Arthur (Kegan Paul and Co.).

Gerard went to his reward before the year was out, but his disciples remained constant in their purpose, contenting themselves with a little house built of logs and earth, and roofed with thatch, where they dwelt in so great fervour that the sweet odour of Christ being spread abroad, others were drawn to join them in their life of Poverty, Obedience, Continency, and daily toil.

Such were the beginnings of the Community to which, the year after its incorporation into the Chapter of Windesheim, came a young man, seeking only to live the life " hidden with Christ in God," and to realize most perfectly the motto " Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari," but whose fame was to shed lustre, not only on his own Monastery, but on the whole Order to which he now humbly craved admittance.

Thomas à Kempis, so called from his birthplace, the little town of Kempen, in the tract of country lying between the Rhine and the Meuse, was the son of a worker in metal, John Hammerlein, and his wife Gertrude, who kept a school for little children.*

Thomas was born about the year 1379, and at the age of twelve was sent to the School of Deventer, then one of the chief centres of learning in Northern Europe. Here he expected to find his elder brother John, who was about fifteen years older than himself, and it shows the rarity of communications in those days that it was not yet known in Kempen that John had already left the Schools to become one of the first six brethren of Windesheim, where he had made his Profession as a Canon Regular in 1387.

Accordingly Thomas set out once more and presented himself at the Monastery, where he was welcomed in brotherly wise by Father John of Kempen.

The two brothers must have resembled one another closely in character, for of the elder we read in Busch's Chronicle that " he was serene, humble of heart, modest in mind, prudent in counsel, and given to contemplation; towards God he was devout, towards his brethren amiable, with a sweet seriousness; never over-bold or clamorous, but quiet and earnest, and a lover of his cell, instant in prayer and daily labours. He was a diligent and excellent corrector of books, writing them well and harmonizing divers copies that were at variance. He was a man of subtle genius, and after Arnold Calcar, our Subprior, he was the chief editor and compiler of our Constitutions, . . . a pillar of our house and Order, and was sent to be Prior in divers houses that pertain to us."

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* The name, according to the custom of the period, is probably derived from his trade: *Hämerlein*, or *Hamerken*, a little hammer. Hence in Latin biographies of Thomas à Kempis and early editions of his works he is called " Malleus " or "Malleolus." Busch (Chron. Wind., Lib. I, cap. xxxix) calls Thomas's elder brother Johannes Hamer de Kempis."

Thomas returned to Deventer bearing a letter from his brother to Florentius, who received the boy with a fatherly kindness which won his heart, and the seven years he was to pass under the care of this holy man confirmed and increased the love the little scholar gave him from the first.

Every page of the life Thomas à Kempis has left us of his revered Master testifies to his enthusiastic admiration for him. He declares that he feels all unworthy to undertake such a task, and that he fears "to cast a shadow upon the bright fame of that illustrious man by telling thereof in homely and barbarous speech . . . but yet that it should seem a hard-hearted and ungrateful thing if he should keep silence as to the virtues of a father so beloved."

The life has been published in English* and sets before us an extraordinarily perfect character, delineated by one fully capable of appreciating its beauty.

The world owes to Florentius the formation of the heart and mind of Thomas à Kempis, whose words have echoed through the centuries, bringing light and guidance to innumerable souls; while those who trace their origin to Windesheim must ever hold in special veneration the memory of him who first suggested to Gerard Groote that the disciples they had gathered round them should live a life in common according to the apostolic rule.

"Florentius taught his disciples," says Thomas à Kempis, "to humble themselves, to know well their own weakness, to submit themselves utterly to their superiors, to prefer themselves to no man, and having made their foundation sure by lowliness, at length, by the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit, to climb to the height of clear knowledge and the light of that full vision of God which is promised to the pure of heart."

His charity was such that he was called "the most pitiful father of the poor," for he would make those who were ulcerous and full of sores come to his house, have them bathed in warm water infused with aromatic herbs, would make ready for each a most cleanly bed, give them needed food and a cup of wine, so that when they returned to their homes they would say to one another: "How good and loving a man is this Lord Florentius." He did not shrink even from lepers, but would visit one "who abode outside the city walls and speak with him as with a friend, and many saw this and wondered at the humility of the Master in sitting by a leper."

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* In *The Founders of the New Devotion*, by Thomas à Kempis, translated by J. P. Arthur (Kegan Paul and Co.).

These traits of the character of Florentius are mentioned because of his undoubtedly great influence on the author of the *Imitation* and on the whole Congregation of Windesheim, but à Kempis wrote the lives of others among the associates of his youth at Deventer, to which we must briefly refer.

There was the lowly cook, John Ketel, who gladly gave his wealth, which was considerable, for he had been a merchant, for the foundation of the Monastery of Windesheim, and was especially loved both by Thomas à Kempis himself and by Master Florentius.

The latter, knowing that John was "strong in spirit," would often blame him for matters in which he was not blameworthy, that the humility with which he received rebuke might serve as a pattern for others. The Master's own mortification and abstraction of mind from the food of the body were such that he seemed to have lost the sense of taste, so that on one occasion he drank from a jar of oil, only recognizing his mistake when the cook inquired from which vessel in the buttery he had taken it; yet he would chide Brother John after a meal saying: "How is it that this food has such an ill savour? Knowest thou not to cook better?" or if the Brother chanced to spill anything he would say: "It is thus that thou dost waste our substance, now breaking something, now spilling something else!" or he, who was most gentle and patient, would exclaim after making a sign for something to be brought: "How long shall I sit here waiting for thee?" but Brother John's virtue never failed, and he would fall on his knees, begging pardon for his tardiness or acknowledging his fault and promising to amend himself.

The account which Thomas à Kempis gives of a companion of his studies, named Arnold of Schoonhoven, reads like a page of the life of St John Berchmans; and of Henry Brune he tells us how once when his Brother was celebrating Mass, one who was present saw in his hands not the sacred Species, but the form of "One more glorious than the sons of man."

These few details regarding the associates of the boyhood and youth of Thomas à Kempis are given in order to show what was the atmosphere in which he lived during those years in which mind and heart are most open to influence. His natural disposition was gentle and studious, and his surroundings were evidently such as to favour an early development of both intellect and virtue. He tells us of the pains he took to acquire a good handwriting that he might become expert in the transcription of books, and how, when learning plain-chant, taught to all children in the Middle Ages, he loved to listen to the grave sweet voice of Florentius, and to watch his reverent demeanour. The School which he attended was a centre of intellectual activity, and from it came forth many illustrious scholars.

Alexander Hegius, Rector in 1475, was the first to attempt printing Greek characters; another Rector, Langius (von Langen), remodelled the Schools in Westphalia; the celebrated mathematician Nicholas of Cusa anticipated Galileo by teaching, uncensured by the Church, the Pythagorean system of the earth's movement round the sun, while Rudolph Agricola, unlike so many of the men of the New Learning, united reverential devotion to the Sacred Scriptures to the most elegant Latinity.

But Thomas à Kempis was destined to a higher fame than that of these great scholars; he was to write a book, the language of which is far indeed from the classical purity of diction they so prized, but which was to be more widely read than any writings save those inspired by God Himself . . . a book penned by "a hand that waited for the heart's prompting,"* and so through five centuries has spoken straight to countless hearts in need of strength and consolation.

In the *Imitation* à Kempis shows the bent of his own mind to a life of contemplation rather than to a life of study; "Summum nostrum studium sit in vita Jesu Christi meditari . . ." "What doth it avail thee," he says, "to discourse profoundly on the Trinity, if thou be devoid of humility and thereby displeasing to the Trinity?" "If thou wouldst know and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown and reputed as nothing." "I am wearied often with reading and hearing many things; in Thee is all I desire or will." "Let all teachers hold their peace, let all creatures be silent in Thy sight: speak Thou alone to me."

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* George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*.

Such thoughts must have early filled the mind of the young student, for he was only about twenty years of age when he left the School of Deventer, and bid adieu to his much-loved spiritual teacher Florentius and to the fervent Community whose spirit he had imbibed during the seven years he had spent among them, though he had never joined the Brotherhood. His whole desire was for that life of solitude and silence which he describes in the twentieth chapter of the *Imitation of Christ*, not that he hoped to avoid trouble and suffering by embracing it. He made choice of the monastic state because he yearned to follow Christ along "The King's High-Way of the Holy Cross," because he sought "not to govern but to serve . . . to suffer and to labour . . . to be made a fool for Christ . . . and with all his heart to humble himself for the love of God."

It was in 1399 that he betook himself to the Monastery of Mount St Agnes, where his elder brother had just been elected Prior; there he begged earnestly to be admitted and "was mercifully received," the two brothers breaking forth, says Rosweyde, into the joyful chant: "Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum."

Rosweyde also gives a description which enables us to form some idea of the appearance of the young man who thus presented himself for admission among the Canons: "He was rather below the middle height, well proportioned, of a dark complexion, but with a bright, fresh colour and remarkably keen eyes." His portrait shows that he had a noble head with a high broad forehead, and the eyes of one whose inward vision has long been fixed on things eternal; the whole attitude and expression is that of such a man as we know Thomas à Kempis to have been—a lover of silence—one who has chosen "to live to God in secret," and therefore "has gone aside with Jesus from the crowd," "turning from the love of visible things to things invisible."

The first duty of the postulant was to study those Constitutions which Prior John had helped to draw up, and which he caused to be observed with great regularity and fervour. Some words from one of his conferences show what manner of teaching he gave his Community, and the spirit in which the author of the *Imitation* was trained: "We wish to be humble without being despised, patient without tribulation, obedient without constraint, poor without want, virtuous without toil, and penitent without sorrow . . . to be praised also though we lack virtue, to be loved though we lack goodness, to be honoured though we lack holiness; yet Christ our God did not so act nor teach, and He hath promised the Kingdom of Heaven to them that do it violence; and to them that take injuries patiently shall He repay glory and honour, but He will leave no evil unavenged."

It is interesting to know that the questions put to Thomas à Kempis before his Clothing in the Novice's Habit, the forms observed for his admittance into Chapter and the prayers and ceremonies used at his Profession, are those still enjoined by the Constitutions of the Communities who can claim to be, in the words of the old Chronicler of Windesheim, " green and flourishing shoots of so great a tree of God's planting."

How proficient Thomas had become in the spirit and practice of those Constitutions is evident from the Offices he held during the greater part of his life; that of Subprior, whose special care it is to watch over the exact observance of the Rule and the yet more important charge of instructing the Novices, which at this time also devolved on the Subprior. For a short time he fulfilled the office of Procurator, being elected because his Brethren seeing him " much inclined to give alms willed therefore that he should have charge of the common purse." Such a reason speaks as eloquently of the charity of the Canons as of that of Thomas; he himself had seen touching examples of love for the poor of Jesus Christ in the House of Florentius, where, as he tells us, he had been " taught in the School of Christ," and he has left two treatises: *De fideli Dispensatore* and *Consolatio pauperum et infirmorum*, which show in what spirit he fulfilled the duties laid on him. He begins the first of these treatises by words with which he seems to urge himself to the faithful accomplishment of duties not altogether congenial to his nature: " Quia nunc charissime officium suscepisti Marthae, non debes bonum et sanctum ministerium acediose peragere ";* and in the second chapter he institutes a beautiful comparison between Martha and Mary and the active and contemplative lives which they represent: "Mary," he says, "must have compassion on Martha," and when she enjoys the Presence of the Beloved must often pray to Him for her sister, borne down by the burden of exterior cares in order that others may sit at His feet; he encourages Martha by the words: "Eia Martha, magna erit merces tua in coelo," and in the third chapter, which is fully mystical, he explains the text of the Canticle of Canticles, "My hands dropped with myrrh, and My fingers were full of the choicest myrrh." The hands of the Spouse, he says, are those who for the love of Christ serve their neighbour; and the works of charity which are bitter and without consolation to themselves, are as choicest myrrh in the sight of God. He goes on to speak of the sacrifices those make who thus forego the sweets of contemplation in order to fulfil God's Will, as constituting that consummate perfection of self-abnegation which Christ will surely reward by admission into the secret place of His Love: "Introduxit me Rex in cellaria sua . . . Charitas enim vinum est. Dum ergo impleris illa, optimo vino inebriaris."

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* *Cf.* the Constitutions: " Of the Procurator: Though like Martha (whose office has been laid upon him) he lies under a necessity of being solicitous and distracted about many things, yet he must not neglect his silence nor entirely renounce the quiet of his cell," etc.

But however much Thomas à Kempis may have dwelt on such thoughts, and rejoiced in giving largely to the poor, we cannot doubt that the bent of his mind was to the more retired life which he led as Subprior and Master of Novices.

In 1423 the death of Bishop Frederick of Blankenheim was followed by the refusal of many of the high clergy to receive the Pope's nominee, and Thomas à Kempis, then Subprior, was among those faithful subjects of the Holy See who willingly went into exile rather than disobey the interdict laid on the refractory diocese. "We departed publicly before sunset," he says, "on the feast of St Barnabas the Apostle, and abode the first night as guests of the Sisters at Hasselt, who showed great charity towards us, and they lamented and wept bitterly that we were driven out with violence . . . they brought us their own bedding wherewith they prepared a place for us to sleep in the stable on the hay and straw, and here we all slept commodiously enough. On the second day, when morning came, we hired a small ship and came by way of the sea to Frisia, the land we sought, having taken sustenance by the way; but we used both sails and oars and got us across not without great hazard, for the wind was contrary. Thus we went thither for the Name of Christ, and to keep obedience to the Holy Roman

Church, the which we all desired to obey, and we committed ourselves to God, Who showed forth His mercy towards us, and snatching us from the peril of the sea brought us safely to our Brothers in Lunenkerc."

Thomas remained there but a short time, for the next year he was sent to help his brother John, who was now Rector of the Sisters of the Convent of Bethany near Arnhem and was in failing health. "He faithfully persevered," says Busch, "in obedience and virtue and resignation of self until at last the Spirit said of him: 'Let him rest from his labours.'" His death occurred in 1432, the year of the return of the Brothers to Mount St Agnes, where Thomas was to spend long peaceful years until his own death in 1471.

His whole life is singularly devoid of exterior events; it flows on as some broad calm stream making its way through the green pasture-lands lying all round the little eminence on which his Monastery was built. It might be thought that one who had not encountered the storms of life would scarcely be able to meet the wants of the young eager spirits who came to him, thirsting indeed for self-sacrifice, but fresh from the brilliant restless world of the fifteenth century, so full of turmoil and strife—a world from which the old ideals were passing away, whilst the forms they had inspired still remained, and the new conceptions which stirred men's minds had not yet found their true expression. At such times of change, as Augustine knew when he wrote the *City of God*, as we also realize in this twentieth century of ours, it may well seem to many that the new forces are at work for destruction rather than for progress, and minds become unsettled, some losing faith because they have not learnt to distinguish between unchangeable principles and forms that pass away, while others turn in their weariness of heart to that which is Immutable, and "with their whole desire tend upwards to things everlasting and invisible"; others again—and these are generally found among the young and ardent hearts to whom life has most to offer—believe that nothing is so powerful to restore all things in Christ as self-sacrifice for His love, and they give themselves up to it "corde magno et animo volenti."

Hearts of this stamp, as well as perplexed and world-weary souls, will alike have found help in Thomas à Kempis. God, when He designs the accomplishment of any work, moulds and prepares for it fitting instruments.

An English writer* has said of the *Imitation* that " it is the Chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish, struggle, trust, and triumph . . . not written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. It remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations . . . the voice of a brother, who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced in the Cloister . . . with a fashion of speech different from ours, but under the same far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness."

There are many passages in the *Imitation*† which cannot be read without the intimate conviction that we are listening to the words of one who has known trouble and darkness of soul, one who has " borne distress both within and without," who has been tried by suffering and humiliation in order that it might be proved how far he could " renounce himself and break himself in all things," and who, in his anguish, found comfort in the thought that Christ had gone before him carrying His Cross.

The trial of soul described in the twenty-fifth chapter of the first Book of the *Imitation* is generally thought to refer to a temptation to despair which attacked him, as it has attacked many souls to whom Christ would give a share in His dereliction on Calvary. But after the storm came a great peace, and Thomas à Kempis enjoyed that " familiar friendship with Jesus " which he so beautifully describes in the *Imitation*.

It would sometimes happen that when he was recreating with his brethren in the orchard or was engaged in conferring with them, he would hear the Voice of the Beloved calling him apart, and perceiving that a special grace had come to him, he would gently excuse himself saying: " Beloved Brothers, I must leave you, for One awaiteth me in our cell," and they, knowing his holiness, easily divined that it was Christ the Bridegroom of his soul Who thus awaited him.

Of his devotion to those solemnities of the Divine Worship, the carrying out of which so specially appertains to the Canonical Order, one of his biographers* tells us that it is difficult to describe his deep recollection and intense reverence in the Church and Choir during the celebration of the Divine Mysteries. When chanting the Psalms he would appear to be ravished by their exceeding sweetness, and it seemed as if his body would follow his soul in its upward flight toward those things eternal to which his whole desire tended, for he stood erect, with uplifted face as one inspired by divine enthusiasm ("sacro enthusiasmo afflatus"), and at such times it was noticed that his feet scarce touched the ground. By night and day he was the first to enter the Church and the last to leave it, and the splendour of the Divine Worship was the object of his delight and of his eager zeal.

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* George Eliot.

† See also chapters x and xvi of *True Wisdom*, and chap. xiii of *The Soliloquy of the Soul*. These and many other passages of the works of Thomas à Kempis show that his soul had undergone that searching and mysterious purification which St John of the Cross calls " The Dark Night of the Soul."

His tender devotion to the Sufferings of Christ is shown in many a passage of his works, and he has left a number of Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Our Lord and especially on His Passion; to follow Christ crucified was his ideal of the Religious Life: "Ama Christum, sequere Jesum, amplectere Crucifixum," he exclaims, and in the beautiful sermon on "The bearing by Jesus of His Cross," he says to his fellow religious:† "O faithful disciple of Christ, make thou also haste to share the burden of His mystic Cross . . . strive to follow Thy Redeemer's steps. . . .

"On entering Religion thou didst indeed take upon thy shoulders the Holy Cross, and on being professed thou didst bind thyself to it still closer. To lead a holy and perfect life in religion is to follow the Crucified. . . . Fear not therefore the strictness of the Order, nor count the days long that thou passest in it; the love of Christ will lighten the burden of thy hardships. There is one Who lived a Life far harder . . . even Jesus the Son of God, the great Patron of the Cross, Who Himself made full proof of its weight. Follow, therefore, Thy Saviour along the way of the Cross, by holding fast to thy life in Religion . . . hold fast to the Rule to which thou hast promised obedience. . . . O my dearly loved

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* Francis de Backer (surnamed "Tolensis" or de Tola), a Canon Regular of Mount St Agnes, carefully collected the traditions concerning his saintly predecessor in the office of Subprior, and wrote a short life of Thomas à Kempis, prefixing it to an edition of the *Imitation*, which he published in 1575.

† The quotations are taken from the English translation of the *Prayers and Meditations on the Life of Christ*, by W. Duthoit, published by Kegan Paul and Co.

Jesus, Prince of the kings of the earth, Leader of the Angelic Host, illustrious Standard-bearer of all Christians, Who, for the salvation of thy servants and that Thou mightest set a perfect example, didst bear upon Thine own shoulders Thy Cross, amidst the jeers and scoffs of the Jews who surrounded Thee, grant me grace, slow of heart though I be, to follow Thee along Thy weary road; be with me to the end; and then lead, I pray Thee, my soul, now absent from its true home, from this body of sin to the Mount of Calvary, the hill of myrrh and frankincense, where Thou wast for my sake slain, that there I may rest under the shadow of Thy Cross, safe beneath its holy sign. . . . Be Thou my Guide along the narrow road, and my Companion as I follow it; be Thou at hand to help me when things are going well with me, to comfort me when they are going wrong. . . . Help me to bear the burden and heat of the day, that I may be able to join my Brethren in every Divine Office and holy observance. . . . Root out of my heart, I pray Thee, O my Crucified Lord Jesus, all love for the things of this world. Take me by the arms and raise me to the height of Thy Cross; let me follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. With Thee at hand, and keeping close to Thee, and so lifted up above all earthly things, gladly will I share Thy poverty and nakedness, passing my life in this world as an exile and unknown. Implant in my flesh the fear of Thee, lest I give way to sloth and laziness; transfix my feet, that so I may steadfastly persevere, and may bravely endure toil and sorrow. May Thy nails be driven into the centre of my heart, and rack me with a wholesome wound, that so I may shed abundant tears of true contrition, and be, as it were, beside myself with the intensity of my love. Inspire me with sorrow, increase my devotion, till nothing is dearer to me, and nothing closer to my heart than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

The life of Brother Thomas corresponded to the words which came from a heart on fire with love for the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus crucified: "He was indeed separated from the world," says one of his biographers,* "and could say 'Mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo. . . . Vivere autem Christus est et mori lucrum,' for while living in the flesh all his conversation was in Heaven, and his desire was to be dissolved and to be with Christ." "Multum humilis fuit," says another,* and therefore he merited to receive from God great and special grace; as he taught by word and writing, so he himself lived with great austerity and fervour of spirit which seemed to increase day by day, so that all wondered thereat. . . . He cared not for worldly affairs, says Rosweyde,† but all his conversation was of God and heavenly things, and in treating of these his words flowed like water from a most clear fountain. From his childhood he bore an exceeding great love to the blessed Mother of God; in prayer he shed abundant tears; he was ever kind to others and ready to excuse their faults, seeking in all things the convenience of his brothers to the neglect of his own.‡ He loved silence and the solitude of his cell, and would say that he nowhere found such peace as in "a little nook with a little book."§ He afflicted his body by penance, and on certain days in the week would scourge himself while chanting the hymn: "Stetit Jesus." This hymn, which has not come down to us, may have been of his own composition, for he wrote several spiritual canticles, some of which are incorporated in his *Vita boni monachi*. A few verses of the hymn beginning "O dulcissime Jesu" may serve to give some idea of the simple fervent piety of the writer:

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* Jodocus Badius Ascensius.

'O Child Jesus, closest, dearest,
   Who didst leave Thy Heaven above,
To the lost world the Life-giver!
   O that I my love may prove,
Read, seek, sing Thee, tell Thy story,
   Theme of sweetness, song of love!

Son most High of God the Highest,
   Yet the human tender Child:
Full of graces and of virtues,
   Yet the lowly and the mild:
Those who love thee much, nor leave Thee,
   Thou to God hast reconciled.

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* "Vita Thomae à Kempis, auctore incerto sed pene coaevo." Antwerp, 1621.

† See *Life*, by Rosweyde, "ex variis auctoribus concinnata."

‡ "For charity, of which it is written that it 'seeks not its own,' is so to be understood that it prefers things that are in common to its own conveniency or profit, not its own to those that are in common" (Rule of St Augustine).

§ "In angello cum libello." "In een hoexken met een boexken."

He who leaves Thee—oh, the sorrow !
  He who finds Thee—oh, the bliss !
For the Lord of earth and Heaven
  Shall for ever more be his:
Who (oh, marvel !) chose the manger
  And gave up that world for this !

* * * * *

Praise to Thee, my kindest Saviour,
  Thee my Lord and God for aye;
I am Thine, to my rejoicing,
  Till the world shall pass away;
By Thy Love, oh, make me love Thee
  More and more as day by day !"*

Among these spiritual canticles are two which reproduce passages found almost textually in the *Imitation*, without the author's giving any indication that he is quoting from another writer.

Thus in the hymn " De Passione Domini Nostri Jesu Christi," the first verse runs as follows:

" Tota vita Jesu Christi
  Crux fuit et martyrium:
Hinc sequi suum servulum
  Decet per iter asperum,"

recalling the well-known words of the chapter on " The Royal Way of the Holy Cross ": " Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium: et tu tibi quaeris requiem et gaudium ?" and the fourth Canticle beginning: " Vitam Jesu Christi stude imitari," echoes some of the opening words of the *Imitation :* " Summum studium nostrum sit in vita Jesu Christi meditari."

That Thomas à Kempis is indeed the author of the *Imitation*, has been taken for granted throughout this short sketch, which aims only at recalling the life of one of the holiest members of the Windesheim Congregation, and it would be quite beyond its scope to enter into the great literary controversy associated with the name of the lowly Brother of Mount St Agnes. The almost general consensus of scholars justifies belief in his authorship, which is successfully advocated by Rosweyde in his *Vindiciae Kempensis*, by Amort,* and in more recent times by Mgr. Malou in his *Recherches historiques et critiques sur le véritable auteur de l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, by Abbot Santini, C.R.L., in *I Diritti di Tommaso da Kempis*, by Hirsche,† and among English writers by Sir Francis Cruise, Waterton, and Kettlewell. The claims put forward in favour of the authorship of the Chancellor Gerson, of Abbot Gersen of Vercelli (whose existence is not even proved), and of the English Canon Regular, Walter Hilton, are discussed by these writers at somewhat wearisome length. Their works are easily accessible, and no attempt will be made here even to summarize their arguments, but it may not be a departure from our purpose to draw attention to a few points on which light is thrown by the Chronicles of both Windesheim and Mount St Agnes. The opinion has been put forward by the supporters of "Abbot Gersen," and by those who hold that the *author of the "Imitation" is still to be found*, to the effect that the allusions in the *Imitation* to a purely *Monastic* form of life, and the use of certain expressions found in the Rule of St Benedict, point to a Benedictine origin, but it will be remembered that the Canons Regular of Windesheim were often called upon to reform or help in the reformation of Benedictine Abbeys, and this supposes a thorough knowledge of the Rule, the observance of which they undertook to re-establish. Moreover, Windesheim was one of those Congregations of Canons Regular which were most strictly monastic in their Constitutions;‡ throughout the Chronicles its Houses are always called *monasteries*, while Thomas à Kempis in all his works, written undoubtedly for his own religious brethren, always uses the expressions "monastery," "monk," "cell," etc.§ The late Dom Arcangelo Lolli, C.R.L., quotes the following words from Busch's *De Reformatione Monasteriorum:* "*Omnia pene quae nos habemus in regula continentur S Benedicti.*"[*]

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* Translation given by Kettlewell. See his *Thomas à Kempis and the Brothers of the Common Life*, a book full of appreciation for the holy Canon Regular, but unfortunately marred by inaccuracies and by the religious prejudice which leads to the omission of passages referring to Catholic practice; even an allusion to the sign of the Cross is omitted, as also " any words sanctioning Mariolatry," etc. The expression suffices to show the frame of mind in which the author approached his subject—the life of a true son of the Church and a devout client of Mary.

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* *Deductio critica*, etc., and *Moralis certitudo pro Ven. Thoma Kempensi*.

† *Thomas Kempensis. De Imitatione Christi.* Berlin, 1874.

‡ Others of this type were the Congregation of the Holy Cross (Coimbra), to which St Antony of Padua belonged before the desire of martyrdom led him to join the Franciscans; that of the most Holy Redeemer, illustrated by the Blessed Archangelo Canetuli, who led a life of almost eremitical austerity and seclusion in the Monastery of St Ambrose near Gubbio; and that of Thurgarten, the home of Walter Hilton, author of the *Scale of Perfection*.

§ Pennotto, in his *History of the Canonical Order*, after clearly explaining the difference between the Canonical and the Monastic Order, goes on to say: "Monachos enim a Monos graece, quod latine unus dicitur, derivat: et ideo quia Canonici Regularii simul in una

In fact, there is a great resemblance in the manner of life led in all the old Orders, notwithstanding the different spirit by which each is distinguished, and no Rule is more explicit than that of the great Patriarch of the West with regard to the daily practices which all of them have in common. The result of this likeness is a certain feeling of kinship, which may, perhaps, be compared to that prevailing among the families, who in a Protestant land have always kept the old faith, never losing its traditions. To those who are aware how closely the life of a member of the Windesheim Congregation resembles that of a Benedictine, there is nothing surprising in those expressions in the *Imitation*, which, to outsiders, appear to bespeak the authorship of a son of St Benedict, and, on the other hand, to those who still observe the very Constitutions which Thomas à Kempis followed, and who are familiar with the history of Windesheim, many expressions in the *Imitation* are fraught with a meaning which must necessarily escape others.

Thus, if we remember how the disciples of Gerard Groote[†] offered to join the *Carthusians* or the *Cistercians*, as being the most fervent Orders in the Church at that period, we are struck by the fact that these are the two Orders named by the author of the *Imitation*, when he would urge his brethren to fervour in their vigils, for, like the Carthusians and the Cistercians, the Windesheimers had undertaken to rise at midnight, wherefore "it would be a shame for them to be sluggish at so holy a time."[‡]

In like manner the words: "It is no small matter to live in a Monastery or in a Congregation,"[§] and the frequent allusions to "the devout" take on a new meaning when we remember how some of Gerard's disciples joined the Order of the Canons Regular founding the *Monastery* of

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domo, et sub uno capite vivunt habentes cor unum et animam unam in Deo, et omnia bona in communi possident, nec quisquam aliquid suum esse dicit; ideo illorum domus, monasteria, et ipsi monachi nonnunquam appellantur" (Book I, chap. xxxviii, p. 122).

[*] See *Gli studi in Italia*, An. VI, vol. ii, fasc. i. Dom Arcangelo's article was published separately in 1883 by Father Becker, S.J. (Tipografia A. Befani, Roma).

[†] See *Gerard Groote and his Work*, p. 15.

[‡] *Imit.*, Book I, chap. xxv.

[§] *Imit.*, Book I, chap. xvii.

Windesheim, while others continued in the *Congregation* of the Brothers of the Common Life, commonly called "the Devout."

It would be easy to multiply such instances, but they could not carry as much conviction as the similarity, so apparent to those reared in the teaching of the School of Windesheim, between the spirit which inspired the *Imitation* and that of those "first fathers" whose doctrine and example Thomas à Kempis drank in from his very childhood.

This recognition of a "family spirit" it may be impossible to communicate to others, yet we would fain hope that,

> "As the vintages of earth
> Taste of the sun that riped their birth,"*

so these pages may have conveyed something of the spiritual atmosphere in which Thomas à Kempis lived and wrote five hundred years ago, and those who perceive it may realize that the *Imitation* is redolent of that same spirit, simple even to homeliness, yet rising to sublimity in the completeness of its self-surrender to the love which "spurs on to great things . . . which tends ever upwards, and is not to be detained by things of earth."†

It has been urged that the undoubted works of the Canon of Mount St Agnes are inferior to the *Imitation*, and it is acknowledged by those who believe in his authorship that the *Imitation* is indeed his masterpiece, as the *Pilgrim's Progress* is that of Bunyan, or *The Spiritual Combat* that of Scupoli; but there are passages in the writings of à Kempis, notably in the *Soliloquy of the Soul*, which attain to the level of his great work, and Mgr. Malou does not hesitate to say that they would excite admiration even were they attributed to St Augustine or St John Chrysostom.‡

Mgr. Malou, in order to refute the objection raised on the ground that à Kempis would have been too young to write such a book as the *Imitation* at the date to which the earliest manuscript is assigned,§ points out that

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[*] Francis Thompson.

[†] *Imit.*, Book III, chap. v.

[‡] He quotes the magnificent passages in chapter xii: "Quaere nunc anima mea tam singulare et supereminens bonum," etc., and that in chapter xx beginning: "Ubi est Deus meus, quem semel vidisse est omnia didicisse?" See *Recherches historiques et critiques*, p. 217.

[§] In the Royal Library, Brussels, is a MS., on the title-page of which it is stated that it was transcribed from the autograph of the author "Thomas à Kempis dictus," written in 1425, and preserved

Pascal died at thirty-nine (he was but thirty-two when he wrote the *Lettres Provinciales*), and that Duns Scotus, who left twenty folio volumes, was but thirty-two at the time of his death. We might add that Brother Gerlac Petersen, who shared the studies of Thomas à Kempis at Deventer and, like him, was trained in the spirit of the Constitutions at Windesheim, wrote his *Breviloquium* at the age of twenty-five and died when only thirty-two, leaving another admirable treatise known as *The Fiery Soliloquy*.

The question has been raised whether the *Imitation of Christ* is to be classed as a "mystical work," and very different conclusions have been arrived at. While Dean Milman in *Latin Christianity* declares that all that is elevating in the older mystics is gathered and concentrated in the *Imitation*, we find Père Poulain asserting that a great confusion of thought is involved when it is referred to as a mystical work. "The word *mystic*," he goes on to say, "supposes a science which contains an element of mystery. . . . Now there is none in the teaching of abnegation and humility"; in a recent life of St Catherine of Siena* we read: "One writer calls the *Imitation* a mystical work because it treats of the union of the soul with God; another denies it this title because it does not treat of *mystic states*"; while Dr. Biggs, in the preface to his translation, says: "Thomas has been usually ranked among the semi-mystics," and he proceeds to explain his own conception of the signification of the term.

The difference in the meaning attributed to the word *mystic* by those who use it explains this divergence of views. During the last three centuries there was a tendency to identify mysticism with the supernatural phenomena which sometimes accompany it, while recently an attempt has been made to bring it down to

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in the Mother-House of the Provincialate. In 1441 Thomas à Kempis wrote the four books of the *Imitation* at the head of his works, and at the end are the words: "Finitus et completus per manus fratris Thomae Kempensis in Monte Stae Agnetis prope Zwollas." Those who dispute his claims have attempted to prove that certain undated and unsigned MSS. are of the fourteenth century, but experts declare that it is impossible to fix the date of such MSS. within thirty or even fifty years. The evidence of John Busch will be remembered (see p. 58), and that of several contemporaries of à Kempis might be added.

* *La mystique de l'apostolat. Sainte Catherine de Sienne,* par l'Abbé Jacques Leclercq (Lethielleux, Paris).

the level of a fervent practice of the Christian life and to confound the spiritual consolations often granted to devout souls—or even certain psychic conditions which are rather emotional than spiritual—with the mystical experiences usually given only to souls of deep humility and generous mortification.

The term *mysticism* is not used by the older writers, but they speak of "contemplation," or use the expression *mystical theology* to denote actual experimental union with God. Taken in this sense it may be defined as "the most perfect and exalted contemplation of God and the most sweet love of God intimately enjoyed and possessed."* We cannot doubt from the evidence of his life and writings, that Thomas à Kempis enjoyed this contemplation and union; indeed, a writer† who has made a special study of the mystic School of Windesheim does not hesitate to say: "Among the mystics of the Low Countries we might name all the members of the recently begun Congregation, but we will content ourselves with speaking only of Thomas à Kempis, who, with Gerard and Florentius, may be considered as representative of the new and practical form of mysticism based on the teaching of Ruysbroeck."

It would be easy to bear out this assertion from the writings of the Windesheimers and especially from those of Thomas à Kempis, but the *Imitation* is in the hands of all, and there are passages in it which clearly point not only to that sweetness in prayer which is the lot of so many fervent souls, but to the far higher plane of mystic union . . . as when he says: "Love often knows no measure, but is inflamed above measure. . . . Whosoever loveth knoweth the cry of this voice. A loud cry in the ears of God is the ardent affection of the soul, which saith, O my God, my Love, thou art all mine and I am all thine. Give increase to my love, that I may learn to taste with the interior mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to swim, and to be dissolved in love. Let me be possessed by love, going above myself through excess of fervour and ecstasy" (Book III, chap. v); or we might refer to the chapter entitled "That we are to rest in God above all Goods and Gifts" (Book III, chap. xxi), which is a beautiful development of

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* See preface to *A Book of Spiritual Instruction*, by Louis Blosius, translated by Father Wilberforce, O.P. (Art and Book Co.). The definition he quotes is from Thomas à Vallgornera, O.P.

† A. Auger, *Etudes sur les mystiques des Pays-Bas*, p. 284.

St Augustine's well-known words: "Thou hast created us for Thyself and our heart is restless until it rest in Thee" (*Conf.*, Book I, chap. i).

In the *Hortulus Rosarum* à Kempis exclaims: "Nothing can satisfy the hunger of the soul but God alone, Who created it . . . no one can rest in created good, but only in God alone, the supreme Good . . . oh! how well it is with him to whom it is given to adhere to God and to enjoy Him in secret . . . oh! when shall God alone be all to me, and I wholly intent on Him and united to Him?" and in the thirteenth chapter* of the same treatise, in a passage which would lose by translation, speaking of Divine Love, he says: "Conjungit summa infimis, transit per media, redit ad summa, unum efficit de multis; laetificat omnes et singulos, non in seipsos vane gloriantes, sed in divino amore se super se extendentes. . . . Per hanc animus ardescit intus, et sicut cera liquescit a facie ignis; nescit modum tenere, sed super omnia luminaria coeli volitat, ut unicum dilectum suum inveniat; quatenus in eo felicissime gaudeat, et secure quiescat." These are the accents of one who has tasted something of the union of which he describes the effects.

It is true that Thomas à Kempis never attains the lofty flights and the sublime transports of Ruysbroeck; in his nature there is more of the dove than of the eagle. His works are characterized in general by touching simplicity and tranquil fervour, and show a deep devotion to the Incarnate Word, and an earnest conviction that the way to union with Him is the Way of the Cross, the constant practice of humility and abnegation of self, carried to heroism. It must be remembered that he had charge of the younger Brethren, and he must have had their instruction chiefly in view; this is especially the case in his *Sermons to the Novices Regular*;† at the end of these he gives examples of the practice of the virtues, or points of Rule and Constitutions on which he has spoken; these little stories may appear trivial when read now, but when he told them to his Novices, they must have had all the charm of personal reminiscences, and the young men will have guessed that their Master was sometimes speaking of himself when he began: "I know an old Brother," and proceeded to tell some quaint anecdote of the earlier days of the Congregation or of the foundation of Mount St Agnes, and of how "the Elders who first dwelt in this house have told us that before ever there was a monastery builded in this place, and before any man had yet come hither to serve God, there did often appear to the shepherds and to them that dwelt near, visions of men in white garments who seemed to go in procession round the mount."*

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* "De laude charitatis et fructibus ejus." The passage is taken from the edition of the works of à Kempis printed at Venice in 1535.

† See a translation made by Dom Vincent Scully, C.R.L. (Kegan Paul and Co.).

The list of the works of Thomas à Kempis is a long one, but many of them are but short treatises; the principal among them are the following:

The Soliloquy of the Soul; Meditations on the Incarnation; Sermons (Three Parts); *The Dialogue of the Novices; The Discipline of the Cloister; Of Silence and Solitude; Of Poverty, Humility, and Patience; Elevation of the Mind; Of True Compunction of the Heart; Of Mortification; Of the Imitation of Christ* (Four Books); *Of the Faithful Steward; The Life of a Good Monk; Of a Good and Peaceable Life; Manual of the Little Ones; Life of the Holy Virgin, Lidewige; The Lives of Gerard the Great, of Florentius, and the Founders of the New Devotion; Prayers, Hymns, and Spiritual Canticles.*†

À Kempis was also an indefatigable copyist; he wrote out the whole Bible, a large Missal, and various treatises of the Fathers, and, moreover, he was the annalist of the Monastery. The last entry made in his hand records the death of a lay-brother, John Gerlac, on January 17, 1471. The Chronicle is continued by one of the Canons whose name is unknown; he tells us how, "In the same year on the feast of St James the Less [May 1] died our most beloved Brother, Thomas Hemerken, who was born in the city of Kempen, in the Diocese of Cologne. He was in the ninety-second year of his age, and this was the sixty-third year after his investiture; likewise he had been a Priest for above fifty-seven years. . . . In the early days of the Monastery he endured great poverty and many labours and temptations. . . . He composed divers little books for the edification of the young, which books were plain and simple in style, but mighty in the matter thereof, and in their effectual operation. . . . The thought of the Lord's Passion filled his heart with love, and he was wondrous comfortable to the troubled and the tempted; but as age grew upon him he was vexed with a dropsy in the legs, and so fell asleep in the Lord and was buried in the eastern cloister by the side of Brother Peter Herbert."*

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* See Chronicle of Mount St Agnes, translated by J. P. Arthur.

† These are more remarkable for their simple piety than for beauty of language or poetical excellence. Thomas à Kempis was fond of expressing his thoughts in rhyme or rhythm, as was often done by Ruysbroeck. It is one of the arguments in favour of the claims of à Kempis to the authorship of the *Imitation*, that it is written in the rhythmical form and with the system of punctuation, adopted in view of this peculiarity in some of his undoubted works. Thus we have in Book I, chap. i:

"Haec sunt verba Christi,
quibus admonemur
quatenus vitam ejus
et mores imitemur,
si velimus veraciter illuminari
et ab omni caecitate cordis liberari."

The obituary notice is of the simplest, but all the biographers of Thomas testify to his high reputation for sanctity; miracles were attributed to him† and pilgrimages were made to Mount St Agnes, no longer only in honour of the Virgin Martyr, but also out of devotion to the holy Canon. In 1672 Maximilian, Elector of Cologne, and Bernard, Bishop of Münster, ordered that a search should be made for the remains of him who was commonly called "the Venerable Thomas à Kempis"; they were discovered on the spot which tradition pointed out as his last resting-place, and the Elector had them conveyed to Zwolle and placed in a rich reliquary; the Canons Regular have made several attempts, but hitherto in vain, to obtain possession of these precious remains. The Archduchess Isabelle‡ greatly desired to see Thomas à Kempis raised to the altars, and in the seventeenth century documents were collected with a view to the introduction of his cause. Amort in his *Moralis certitudo pro Ven. Thoma Kempensi*, states that his object in writing was to prepare the way for his Beatification.§ The cause, however, has never been introduced, but all must feel that Brother Thomas of Mount St Agnes was indeed one of those whom he himself describes, "who seemed to themselves as naught, but in the eyes of God they were very precious and beloved" (*Imitation*, Book I, chap. xviii).

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* J. P. Arthur's translation of the Chronicle of Mount St Agnes.

† Agnietenburg had long been known as "the Mount of Miracles" on account of favours there obtained through the intercession of St Agnes.

‡ Daughter of Philip II of Spain; she reigned in the Spanish Low Countries conjointly with the Archduke Albert from 1598 till his death in 1621, and then governed alone till her own death in 1633.

§ See Dom Vincent Scully's *Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis* and the appendix to Sir Francis Cruise's well-known work.

IX

THE CANONESSES REGULAR OF ST AUGUSTINE

(The Foundresses of Diepenveen)

"Inasmuch as I have told a few things concerning the Monasteries of men that were incorporated as members of the Chapter of Windesheim, I will now turn my pen to the convents of nuns of the same Order." Thus writes John Busch in the forty-third Chapter of his Chronicle. Throughout his work we find frequent references to the pious women who had been among the first and the most eager to carry out the teaching of Gerard the Great; in fact, "the Sisters of the Common Life" preceded "the Brothers," and formed the Community to which Gerard gave up the large house in Deventer, which he had inherited from his parents. Here the Sisters lived a life of prayer and work, maintaining themselves by spinning, sewing, or copying and illuminating books; they also nursed the sick and taught the children of the town. They wore a grey habit, but were bound by no vows, though they lived under obedience to one of their number, who was elected every year on the feast of St Gregory (March 12); her official title was the "Mistress," but she is more frequently called in the old Dutch annals by the name which the Sisters affectionately gave her—"the Mater." Upon these Communities of pious women Gerard expended "the anxious care of a father . . . and they were soon multiplied exceedingly and filled the land"; "What state is there to-day," exclaims John Busch, "or what township or city in the whole Diocese of Cologne but rejoiceth to have known the savour and scent of these same lilies?"

When the monastery of Windesheim was built, some of these faithful disciples of "the Master," who before his death had advised its foundation, contributed generously towards it, and soon after, "out of a desire for greater devotion and a higher life, and from the wish to keep the law of perfection instituted by the Gospel, took counsel with our Fathers, and, with one heart and will, agreed to enter our Order and therein to serve God for ever."

New convents were erected or communities already existing were incorporated into the Chapter of Windesheim. The first houses were those of Mary's Meadow (Marienkamp or Marienveld); of St Barbara's Valley, at Tirlemont (founded in 1388); of our Lady and St Agnes, at Diepenveen; and before long there were numerous communities of Canonesses, the order thus "putting forth new buds and gathering together the fairest flowers of the earth for Holy Church, and reaping a rich harvest for her, for the flowers of this gathering are virgins."

But it would be wearisome to enumerate the various foundations or to follow the good chronicler in his untiring eulogy of his sisters in religion, to praise whom he heaps up words, declaring that "they are the ensample and pattern, the flower, the honour and glory of all Sisters and nuns who desire to serve God!"

This he says especially of the Sisters of the Monastery of Diepenveen, founded in 1400 near Deventer, "because the house there could not contain all the virgins who desired to serve God." As this house may be considered the Mother-House of the Communities still existing at Bruges and in England, we will turn from the Chronicle of John Busch to follow the account given in that of Diepenveen itself* of the lives of some of its first inmates; we shall thus be able to form an idea of its spirit and also to catch many an interesting glimpse of life in the early fifteenth century.

Swedera of Runen, one of its foundresses, was the daughter of Frederick van Rechteren, a gentleman "of one of the best families of the land, and when she was of fit age, he gave her in marriage to a knight of the province of Drenth, who was noble and of high standing."

The youthful pair lived in great happiness and mutual love; their favourite pastime was the chase, and Swedera enjoyed nothing better than to follow the hounds, mounted on a spirited horse, leaping fearlessly over all obstacles, and recking little of the injury often done to the farmers and peasants as the hunt swept over their fields. But she had a natural love of justice, and when her chaplain remonstrated with her as to the harm resulting from what was her greatest pleasure, she resolved to give it up entirely, and never more did she take part in the hunting parties which, in the Middle Ages, were almost the sole means of variety in the monotony of country life. From that time, having begun to "understand concerning the needy and poor," she gave most generous alms and showed herself full of pity and mercy.

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* Part of the Diepenveen MS. was published by Anth. Matthaeus so early as 1707, and another part was edited in 1886 by W. Opzoomer (Gebr. Belinfante, *'s Gravenhage*). In 1904 D. A. Brinkerink (Protestant minister at Bovenkarspel) brought out a complete and careful edition. Both these have been consulted for this and the following sketch. The *Vita et conversacio Salome prioresse de Diepenveen* is in the Royal Library, Brussels (MS. No. 8849-8859, fols. 149-164).

She bore her husband one child, a little son, who was the joy of his parents, and on whom his father especially founded all his hopes, but God took him in his early childhood, to their intense grief.

Shortly after the good knight also died, and his widow mourned him truly, for she loved him with a tender affection; yet did she now realize that God was opening to her the way to a more perfect life, and that He would have her all to Himself; she determined, therefore, to give herself up entirely to good works, and to employ her large fortune therein.

But a new trial was in store for her; the Lord of Runen had not taken the necessary measures to secure his inheritance to his widow, and her right to it was disputed. The Chronicle does not explain the matter—probably those that had despoiled her were still living when it was indited—but it sets before us very graphically a truly medieval scene.

It happened one day, when the Lady of Runen was returning to her castle, followed by seven servitors, after having assisted at Mass, that she was met on the way by a woman named Vossine, who was very rich but could lay no claim to noble blood. She gave visible signs of trouble and confusion as she approached the Lady, showing her desire to address her, though hitherto she had had only such relations with her " as a woman of low degree hath with one of high birth."

Swedera with her wonted kindness went forward and taking her hand said to her: " How now? Hath aught amiss befallen thee that thou art thus troubled?" Then Vossine (the fifteenth-century Chronicler never prefixes any term of courtesy to the name of this burgher woman), recovering herself somewhat, declared that, knowing the lands of Runen must be lost to the Lady, her son, who was rich enough to purchase them, and who was struck by her beauty and virtues, would fain make her his wife, for they hoped the desire of retaining her estate would cause her to overlook the difference of rank.

Swedera was too humble and too good-hearted to betray the indignation which she might well feel at the strange suggestion that she should give her hand to one so far below her degree; she merely answered, therefore, that since she would now be poor and Vossine's son was so rich, the marriage would not be suitable, and parting kindly with the woman, she pursued her way homeward.

But one of her servants had gone before, and he now returned to tell her what Vossine had been well aware of (and this it was which had caused her confusion), to wit, that the enemies of the Lady of Runen had seized the opportunity of selling the castle during her absence, and it had been bought by no other than Vossine's son, who already had taken up his abode there with his family. Swedera listened to this message with calm and resignation to God's holy will, and immediately set out for Kampen,* where she was received with the honours due to her rank.

This episode reminds us of St Elisabeth of Hungary, turned out of her castle by her husband's kindred, and as we proceed we shall find other points of resemblance between her life and that of Swedera. As Elisabeth had sought the protection of the Bishop of Bamberg, so did the Lady of Runen betake herself to the Bishop of Utrecht,† and she received the same advice, for, after having expressed his indignation at the way in which she had been treated, and obliging the usurpers of her lands to agree to pay her annually the dowry to which none could dispute her right, he used all his influence to induce her to marry again, saying that "the state of widowhood did not become a person of her rank and importance." Then Swedera made answer: "I had my dear Lord for but a short time, and while he yet lived I resolved that, should he die before me, I would never give myself to another man, but would live entirely to God." And the Bishop was much moved, for he was a true servant of God, and he said: "Lady, God hath not given to all women that which He hath bestowed upon thee. Therefore it behoveth thee to rejoice with thanksgiving, and to remain firm in thy purpose."

Swedera settled at Deventer in a large mansion where she devoted herself to good works, putting herself under the direction of Florentius Radewyn and those who had charge of Master Gerard's house. In one of them, Master John Brinkerink, she found her Conrad of Marburg. Like St Elisabeth, she had kept with her one maiden of gentle birth, who was to her a friend rather than an attendant; she was now required to separate from this companion, and the sacrifice cost her greatly. There was sent her instead an "ancient and somewhat rigid Sister of the Common Life," who had been superior in Master Gerard's house, and with her came two other Sisters to form and instruct Swedera in their own manner of life. Soon after we hear how she received in all humility a rebuke for continuing to wear white gloves, a habit which she gave up when she was told it savoured of worldliness.

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* In the Diocese of Utrecht, not far from Mount St Agnes.

† Florentius of Wevelichoven. "Uncle to one of our Sisters."

Touched by what she saw of the poverty of the Sisters, she now resolved to go to dwell in a small mean house, leaving her fine mansion to the Fathers of Windesheim, but the municipality of Deventer making some difficulty on the subject, she engaged on her side her two nephews, Wijnelt van Arnhem and Sweder van Rechteren, and through their influence she carried out her plan.

We cannot but be glad to hear that at this time there came to live with her a great friend of her youth, the Lady Abbess of Vreden, whose life will be also sketched, for these two holy women became the foundresses of Diepenveen.

Both aspired to a higher life than that of the Sisters of Master Gerard's house, edifying as it was, and on consulting Father John Brinkerink, they learned that he had formed the plan of establishing a Monastery of Canonesses Regular and had been training them, all unknown to themselves, to be its foundation stones, though even now he prudently kept them still waiting for some time.

It was on June 3, 1401, that the Lady of Runen gave up her annual revenue of three hundred gulden for the endowment of the Monastery of Diepenveen, which she entered with the Sisters of her house, and the former Abbess of Vreden. The "ancient and somewhat rigid Sister" was appointed Superior, and Father John himself continued to train these first novices.

No work, we are told, seemed to them too hard, no privation too great; their food was of the poorest, their habit coarse, their whole life austere; "but they embraced all that was hard to nature with love, desiring only to follow in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to die to self that He might live in them."

Sister Swedera was of a delicate constitution, and the others would sometimes try to afford her some little extra help, but this was to her a cause of suffering, and she complained of it to Father John Brinkerink; his answer is characteristic: "They are treating you as a great lady," he said drily; "it is for you to see to it that they do not lead you to the heaven of fine ladies." "Certes," adds the Chronicler, "it was far from her wish to be so treated; she would cheerfully undertake the most menial tasks, washing the plates, scouring the pots and pans, carrying food to the animals, and even helping to manure the garden."

One day the Superior, in order to try her, told her to go and buy fish in Deventer. "Full of joy at the idea of thus passing humbly through the streets, in which she had so often displayed her magnificence, she hastened to set out, but Sister Griete called her back, saying: 'In what wilt thou put the fish? Hast thou no basket?' and on Swedera's confessing that she had not thought thereon, the Mistress said: 'I cannot send to Deventer one who seemeth not to know whither she goeth, nor for what purpose.'"

To a Sister, who, admiring the perfection of her obedience, asked her to give her the secret of always appearing equally pleased whatever might be commanded, Swedera answered: "It is very simple . . . I have given my will to God and to my Superior, and I do not take it back. . . . I *will* whatsoever they will me to do."

Six years after her entrance in the Monastery she had founded she fell ill, and it became clear that the Lord was about to call her to Himself. The details of her last days on earth are very beautiful. She continued to work when it seemed to all that the time had come for her to rest, but sometimes the Sisters on entering the room would find her sitting with closed eyes and with such a radiant countenance that they felt in whose company she was, and she would say, smiling: "I seem to sleep, but my heart watcheth." To Sister Salome, who was then our "Mater" and knelt weeping by her bed, she said: "Dear little Mother, why weepest thou?" and then added: "Tell me, how long, thinkest thou, will our Lord thus play with me?" "I know not," answered Salome, "but one thing I know well, that He playeth in this way only with His friends." "Yea," said the dying nun, fixing her eyes on the Crucifix, "it is indeed the game He playeth with His loved ones, but if He playeth so sweetly with His cross, where is there room for His justice?" And, closing her eyes, she added: "The Lord cometh with salvation, the Lord cometh with unction, the Lord cometh with glory. The Saviour cometh not without salvation, nor the Christ without unction, nor our God without glory."

Mother Bertha then read to her from the Passion of Our Lord, and when she came to the passage in which it is told how He entrusted His dear Mother to St John, Sister Swedera begged her to pause a little that she might ponder thereon, and she remained silent; then Mother Bertha prayed her to take some cordial, but she refused saying: "If thou didst know how sweet is the food wherewith my soul is nourished, thou wouldst not ask me to partake of any other." Shortly after Father John Brinkerink entered and gave her the Sacraments of the holy Church, and when he had celebrated his Mass, he came once more and said he would give her a cordial that would do her good; then said she again, as from the fulness of her heart: "Ah, my Father, I have most sweet food which nourisheth me"; and Father John urged her no more, for he understood that Jesus Himself was her food. "Oh, how marvellous and satiating is that repast in which the Bridegroom unites Himself to His Bride!"

Towards five in the evening the nuns begged Sister Swedera to say some few words which they might keep in their hearts as a memory of her, and she said: "Humility, Obedience, Patience, Purity, Poverty, Charity. Ask these virtues of God, for they are only given to those who ask and who turn to Him with all their hearts."

Towards the eleventh hour of the night, her face lighted up and took an expression of inexpressible sweetness, and she gave up her holy soul into the hands of her Creator.

It was the feast of St Peter's Chair (February 22) of the year 1407.

The Chronicle begins the life of Swedera's great friend, the Abbess of Vreden, with unwonted solemnity:

"In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be everlasting love and glory, I will now recount the great things that were wrought by God in the soul of our holy Mother and well-beloved Sister, Yutta van Ahuys, the noble Abbess of Vreden.

"She was of high birth, and she was placed by her parents in the Abbey of Vreden when she was but five years old.

There abode many noble damsels living together, and each one was free to go if she listed. And the Abbey was held in high honour and had much wealth.

"Yutta was pleasing and fair to look upon, and mature even in her early youth, so that the other young damsels held her in great reverence, and when she was older she was made Cellaress and some time after Prioress, and then, the Abbess chancing to die, Yutta was chosen in her place.

"But her right was disputed, and it was six years before she was able to take possession of the temporal dominion of the Abbey.*

"When at length she was able to do so, it was with much display of worldly state and pomp. Folk came from far and wide, and there was a great gathering of the nobility, with many carriages and horses. But in the midst of all the splendour God would not let the young Abbess be without a reminder of the fleeting nature of this world's glory, for a man who was driving her carriage fell from his seat, and the wheels passed over his body and he died; so throughout the feasting and honour of that day the thought that one had been killed in her service did not leave her."

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* The story of Yutta van Ahuys and her Abbey of Vreden shows us a state of things so different from that which prevails in our day that it is difficult for us to understand it fully, and many do not even know of its existence. The matter is one which has never been thoroughly investigated, but it seems that the families of the founders of some Abbeys, or great benefactors, had the right of nominating to the living, and most frequently bestowed it upon younger or otherwise unmarriageable daughters; hence we find certain families represented in a house through many generations. (The case of Angélique Arnauld of Port Royal, at a much later period, will be remembered.) The Church respected the will of these subjects too much to compel them to take vows unless it was entirely of their own free will; hence we find in the Middle Ages so-called " nuns " who had never taken vows and consequently were not nuns at all. Thus the inmates of the great Abbey of Quedlinburg (Saxony), who lived at first according to the rule of St Benedict, and after the twelfth century became Austin Canonesses, were bound by no vow. (See *Woman under Monasticism*, by Eckenstein.)

If, however, one of these ladies were elected Abbess, it was required that she should first make her Profession. The dispute with regard to the election of Yutta van Ahuys may have concerned either the right of the nuns to elect, or her right to be elected, for no mention is made of her ever making vows. There was evidently plenty of scope for a lawsuit, and we are not told how the difficulty was met or eluded. There was apparently no ecclesiastical objection when she passed from the Abbey of Vreden to the Lady of Runen's house, nor when she entered among the Canonesses Regular. The Abbey of Vreden being an abbey with landed property, consequently a benefice, would fall under the reservation of Clement V, who reserved to the Holy See all archbishoprics, bishoprics, major and minor benefices, which reservation was repeated by each successive Pope until the Council of Trent, when the whole legislation changed.

God sent her frequent illness, and she went to consult a famous Doctor of Physic, Master Everard of Almelo.* Through him she made the acquaintance of Master Florentius and of Father John Brinkerink, who, seeing the worldly state which she maintained, said to her: "Lady, you come hither for the health of your body; it behoveth you rather to seek that of your soul."

For two years he laboured patiently to awake within her the desire for better things, and the young Abbess conceived a great reverence for him; she would write to him with her own hand and send the letters by the "serving-knave" (*dienstknecht*) of her chamber. Then, beginning to entertain the purpose of some day relinquishing her Abbey and entering on a more religious course, she learnt to spin, that she might be able to do something useful. "But the high-born damsels were much displeased thereat, for they held it a great dishonour to them that their Abbess should occupy herself in so mean a manner.

"But the Lady of Runen helped her friend to continue in her good purpose, and was blithe of heart to see her persevere in the way of God.

"It happened on a time that the Abbess went to Deventer to visit Father John Brinkerink, and she took with her two little dogs, as is the manner of the nobility, for she loved them so much that she liked not to be separated from them." We can picture the scene: Father John eyed the little dogs, he marked the attachment of the Abbess for them, and he saw, doubtless, in her a naturally noble soul, held back from high things by trifles, so when the Lady of Vreden left him, it was with the order to drown her "twie hondekens" on her return to the Abbey. If anything be wanting to prove that her attachment to them was what St Ignatius, a hundred years later, would have called "inordinate," we find it in what the Chronicle tells us of her feelings in carrying out the stern command of her director. She left him with a heavy heart, yet on her return to the Abbey she sent for a sack, and though her heart almost failed her, and it seemed to her she would sooner die than do such a deed, she put the dogs with her own hands into the sack and drowned them as it had been commanded her.

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* He was also a priest and had founded the Monastery of Nordhorn. He was a great friend both of the Canons and of the Brothers of the Common Life. Thomas à Kempis wrote an account of him in which he says: "When I attended the School of Deventer, I fell sick, and with such care did he tend me that by the mercy of God a like sickness fell not upon me for many years after" (Chronicle of Mount St Agnes, translated by J. P. Arthur).

We are vividly reminded of Chaucer's Prioress and her "smale Houndes," and of how "sore wept she if on of hem were dede." No doubt the somewhat severe Father John* saved the Lady of Vreden from fulfilling the type that the English poet describes, instead of developing into the great servant of God she later on became.

In all his relations with these first nuns of Diepenveen, we shall find this father showing a tendency to sternness that is accounted for by the abuses, so prevalent in many Monasteries, from which he was determined to preserve his spiritual children, whom he would make worthy daughters of the Reform of Windesheim.

We are glad, nevertheless, to be told how he wept at the Clothing of the young Sister Katharine van Naaldwyck, so that he could scarcely chant the Gospel, a mark of tenderness of heart that we should hardly expect nowadays from the kindest spiritual director, but the fifteenth century was both a vigorous and an emotional age! The Chronicle tells us that the generous act that he had demanded of the Lady of Vreden was the beginning of that perfect obedience which was her characteristic later on.

Indeed, it seems to have marked a turning-point in her life, for immediately after we hear of her leaving the Abbey to live a life of poverty and humility, "thus gaining a signal victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh."

"Before leaving she would give a great feast, both to the poor and to the nobility, and she would serve at the banquet with her own hands, and there was not a dry eye in the whole assembly, she alone remaining calm. But when the carriage was ready, the Lady stood at the door and beheld her niece Griete van Ahuys weeping, and this niece she loved tenderly, for she had come to the abbey as a child of two years old, and was now Prioress, and chosen to succeed as Abbess. And Yutta embraced her, saying: 'It is hard to leave thee, my most dear one,' and so departed."

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* Thomas à Kempis has left an account of Father John Brinkerink, and of how by "great labour he built a large Convent for Devout women and caused them to be imbued with holy learning . . . and ruled them strictly for twenty-six years." After his death, Henry Mande saw him "in glory unspeakable . . . and he bore upon his breast a most fair jewel with this inscription: 'Lord, Thy commandment is exceeding broad,' by which was signified his love to each and all."

From that day her prayers were ever that Our Lord would grant her the grace to be despised and accounted for nothing for His sake. "And the Lord," says the Chronicler, "gave her the desire of her heart in full measure."

Following the advice of Father John, she took up her abode with the Lady of Runen, and it is pleasant to hear that the latter prepared for her "the fairest room in the house." The two friends submitted to the rule of the "ancient Sister" as little children who had never known what it was to govern. Sometimes it happened that the noble lords and their ladies who visited Swedera van Runen, seeing the former Abbess, whom they did not recognize in the woman poorly clad and suffering from a disfiguring eruption, with which God allowed her to be afflicted at this time, would cast on her looks of contempt and draw back from her contact, as if fearing contagious disease, "and this was hard to her nature, for she had ever been treated with much honour. But Our Lord, Who is a great Physician, knows how to give to each one the medicine that will best cure the diseases of his soul."

We have seen how, in 1401, the ladies of Runen and Vreden entered the Convent they had built, and became Sister Swedera and Sister Yutta. As Sister Yutta was delicate, and was no longer young, Father John Brinkerink ordered that she should be allowed certain helps with regard to diet and sleep. (The Sisters had adopted the midnight rising and the frequent fasts and abstinence of the Windesheim Fathers.) Thomas à Kempis reminds us that "religious are yet in the flesh, and not angels,"* and it is, perhaps, inherent to the nature of some that dispensations should cause them trouble. The Sisters may have feared that the former Abbess would introduce relaxation in their poor and austere life, and some complained to Mother Salome and to Father John himself. One day Sister Yutta was told that there were some among the Sisters who thought her fanciful. She received this humiliation with the greatest sweetness, "and," says the Chronicle, "it seems as if from that day she cast off the last remnant of self-love, and her soul, which had a moment of sharp struggle, was filled with such sweetness and happiness that she could scarce contain her joy."

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* *Imit.*, Book III, chap. lvii, v. 3.

It is difficult to understand what signs of "over delicacy" could have been found in Yutta's manner of life, for the Chronicle multiplies incidents showing her mortification, her humility, her love of poverty and hard work.

She would seek pretexts to go and help the Sisters in the kitchen and the cow-house; she would scour pots and pans, and always take the most menial task as her portion; she would wash the plates of the workmen, and would eat their leavings and what they had thrown away as not good enough for them. There was a little child in the Monastery who must have been the first pupil of the Canonesses; Sister Yutta had special charge of her and served her as if she had been her servant. She would place this child next to her at meals in order to put on her plate all the best bits! It is to be feared this little one was somewhat spoilt, for we hear of her speaking to her holy mistress in a way that certainly does not accord with our ideas of the reverence paid by children of the period to their elders, and which would not be tolerated even in this irreverent twentieth century.

This child (she was seven or eight) did not always go willingly to learn to read the Psalter, which Sister Yutta taught her, and sometimes like "the litel clergion" she would ask, "What this Latin was to say," and if her mistress answered, "I know not," she would exclaim: "And you were an Abbess! A fine kind of Abbess you must have made!"

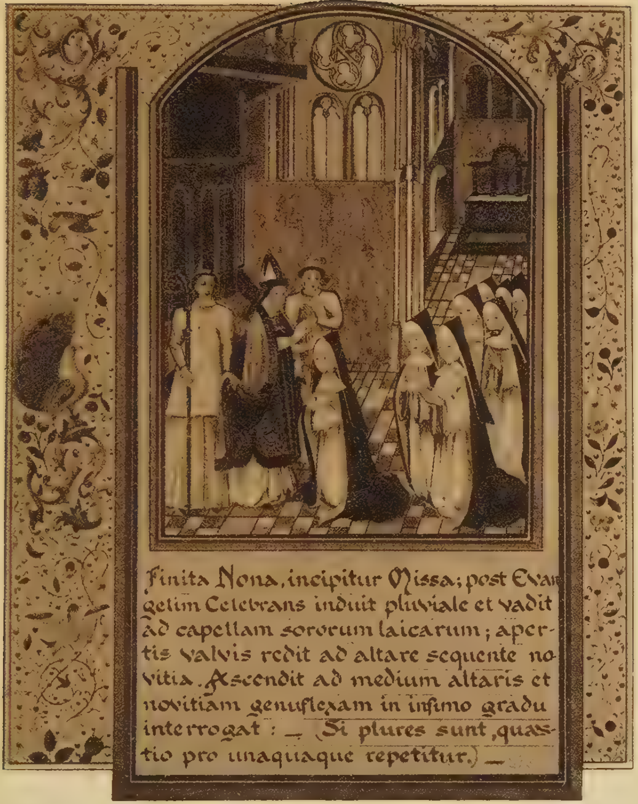
We can scarcely conclude that Yutta, who had been sent to an Abbey at the age of five with the view of making her an Abbess, did not know Latin, but no explanation is given of her answer to the child. The Chronicler tells us, however, that she was ever ready to hide her knowledge, and to make herself be esteemed a fool for Christ's sake. We know also that she wrote beautifully and copied many meditations and extracts from spiritual writers for the use of the Monastery of Diepenveen, and it is noted that she treasured every scrap of vellum, and would transcribe thereon edifying sentences that might furnish good thoughts to herself and her Sisters.

But her course in religion was to be brief like that of her friend and co-foundress, Swedera van Runen.

She fell ill towards the end of the year 1407, and when in the following January Father John of Heusden came for "the first investiture of the Sisters of Diepenveen," she lay on her deathbed. She was clothed and professed on the same day, the feast of St Vincent (January 22), and the next day she was united to her Bridegroom in the heavenly city, Jerusalem, to be happy for ever with Him for whom she had been so inflamed with love, and for whom she had longed with so ardent a desire that in a short space she had fulfilled a long time.

An account of this first Profession at Diepenveen is given both by Thomas à Kempis (whose Brother John à Kempis assisted at it), and by John Busch, who resumes the history of the beginning of the Monastery as follows: "In the year of Our Lord, 1400, the House for nuns at Diepenveen was first taken in charge by the Reverend Father John Brinkerink, the familiar friend of Gerard Groote, and it was inhabited by the Devout Sisters of Master Gerard's House in Deventer; the year following they obtained letters under seal from Frederick, Bishop of Utrecht, granting permission to set up there a convent of nuns of the Order and placing the same under the authority of the Chapter of Windesheim; and at last, in the sixth year, Father Brinkerink obtained authority from the Chapter and Prior of Windesheim to receive the Profession of the Sisters, veil them, act as their Visitor, and confirm a Prioress. On the feast of St Agnes (1408) the twelve Sisters were invested, according to the form provided in the statutes, by John of Heusden, our venerable Prior, and the Priors of Marienburg and Agnietenberg were also present, together with a multitude of people, who came eagerly to witness these solemn nuptials. There was great joy among the Devout Sisters, noble matrons, and maidens, and the sound of their joyful weeping ascended to Heaven. On the following day the Dame of Vreden was invested, and by reason of her infirmity made her Profession on the same day. In 1402 the nuns of Diepenveen and those of the sister-house of Bronope were incorporated as members of the Chapter of Windesheim. The Sisters of both houses were employed by John Busch in the work of reforming Monasteries."

One or two instances will suffice to give an idea of the difficulties to be incurred in this most arduous undertaking and of the success of the Sisters. John Busch himself travelled across Germany with three nuns of Bronope to reform an Austin Canonry, that of Marien-



Finita Nona, incipitur Missa; post Evangelim Celebrans induit pluviale et vadit ad capellam sororum laicarum; apertis valvis redit ad altare sequente novitia. Ascendit ad medium altaris et novitiam genuflexam in infimo gradu interrogat: — (Si plures sunt, quaestio pro unaquaque repetitur.) —

FROM THE CEREMONY BOOK, ENGLISH CONVENT, BRUGES

TRAVELLING IN XVTH CENTURY

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burg, near Hildesheim. The three Sisters Ida, Tecla, and Aleydis so won the respect and love of the inmates of the house that when they left, having accomplished their work, their departure was a cause of grief to all, and on their way home they received letters in which the nuns tell them: " When we see your empty places in the choir, the refectory and dormitory, our sorrow is such that we cannot refrain from weeping."*

The nuns of Diepenveen were sent to reform a monastery known as Hildewartshusen at Munden on the Weser. The convent had been founded so far back as the time of Charlemagne for " the daughters of kings." Later on they admitted the daughters of Dukes and Counts, then those of knights and of landowners, and at length " even the daughters of burghers and of small landowners." We can scarcely wonder that in a Monastery founded in so worldly a spirit, discipline and all sense of what befits the religious life had entirely disappeared, enclosure was no longer observed, and the nuns followed their own devices. " They rode out, hunted, played, and danced."

" The Duchess of the territory in which the monastery was situated " obtained some nuns to attempt a reform, but they did not succeed, and when they left in the waggon the inmates of the convent ran to the windows to watch their departure, exclaiming: " God be thanked, the devils are going !"

The Prior of Windesheim was then asked to give two or three of the Sisters of Diepenveen, and after hesitation he sent three, of whom Sister Christina was Superior. But when this was announced to the nuns of Hildewartshusen they were very angry and said, " The devils are again coming !" and there was a great uproar, such as took place when St Teresa was named Prioress of the convent of the Incarnation against the will of the nuns. For some reason, which is not clear, the Sisters of Diepenveen were advised to take off the black mantles in which they had travelled, and to present themselves in their white surplices; it seems to have been thought that this would ensure them a better reception. But the excitement remained great; one nun behaved in such a strange way while Sister Christina was being shown over the Monastery that the kind-hearted Sister from Diepenveen thought she must be ill, and in all simplicity she prayed the Prioress to give her some wine to do her good. This won over the refractory nun, and soon the whole convent was changed, and the newcomers were loved and respected by all, and " by the Duchess." The lay-Sister who had come, and who took charge of the kitchen, gave special edification by her holiness.

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* Busch, *De Reformatione Monasteriorum.* An account of this episode is given by Lina Eckenstein in her *Woman under Monasticism.*

The nuns remained six years, and when they returned to Diepenveen it was to the grief of all the inmates of Hildewartshusen.

In 1456 there were as many as ninety nuns at Diepenveen, and " twenty-five virgins not yet invested."

In 1415 the Convent of St Ursula's was founded in Louvain at the request of a noble lady, Elisabeth de Wesele, widow of Henry de Duysborch. " Moved by the spirit of God, in the year 1415, on the 15th of November she gave certain houses in Louvain, in the street named Mi-rue (Halfstraat), and vineyards, and also other inheritance for the foundation of a Monastery, in which Sisters, having perpetual enclosure, should live." The first Sisters of this convent, like those of Diepenveen, were chosen from Master Gerard's house in Deventer, Sister Margaret Scherpens of Zutphen being appointed Superior. Her name appears among the signatures of the twelve Sisters who gave Diepenveen to its foundresses in 1401. She must have been acquainted with the saintly men who gathered round Gerard Groote, with Master Florentius, and Thomas à Kempis. The first Profession at St Ursula's took place on the feast of St Augustine, 1420, and on April 21 of the following year the convent was solemnly enclosed. Martin V, by a bull dated from Florence on July 18, 1421, confirmed the erection of the Monastery, ordained that the nuns should be under the spiritual direction of the Prior of Bethlehem,* and allowed them to wear the black veil (" velo nigro velari, ad instar inclusarum monialium ").

The nuns of this convent were among the first† to add the vow of enclosure to the three ordinary vows of religion. This vow was till then, says the Chronicler of Bethlehem, " a thing unheard of (*res inaudita*) in the Church."

The beginnings of the convent were marked by many difficulties, but the Sisters had the privilege of being encouraged in their holy purpose by one who had dwelt at Groenendael with Blessed John Ruysbroeck, and had been his favourite disciple. This was Father John of Holaer, who was now Prior of Bethlehem. Thus the Sisters of St Ursula, from which sprung the English branch still existing at Bruges and in England, drank in the spirit and traditions of the Green Valley, almost at its source. Their number increased so rapidly that in 1438 they founded the Monastery of the "Sweet Spring" (Soeterbeke), which has also survived the storms of the sixteenth century and the French Revolution.*

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* The Canons Regular of Bethlehem (Louvain) joined the Chapter of Groenendael in 1410 and were finally incorporated with that of Windesheim in 1414. The Chronicle of Bethlehem is still extant and is full of interest.

† The first of the Canonesses to vow enclosure were those of St Barbara at Tirlemont.

The nuns of both Diepenveen and Louvain received children for education, but this work of theirs will be made the subject of another chapter.

The convent of St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins escaped suppression under Joseph II owing to its School; two delegates from the government had already taken the inventory of its possessions, including the church ornaments, when this plea was admitted and it was spared, but only to share the fate of so many other convents in the Low Countries during the French Revolution; the decree of suppression was dated December 5, 1798, and the buildings were sold the following year. But the English offshoot was to remain green and flourishing to this day. The account of its foundation in 1609, and the three hundred years of its subsequent history, will be told in the second part of this work.

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* This Community is now at Deursen in North Brabant (Holland) with one other (Ouderode) in the same province, but strangely enough, while these houses in the Netherlands have allowed their Constitutions to be gradually changed so as scarcely to represent those of Windesheim, it is the English branch which has maintained them almost intact, with such alterations as the Council of Trent and the recent revision of Canon Law have required.

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X

"A PRIORESSE AND NONNES TWO"

Mother Salome entered the Monastery of Diepenveen in 1406; she was the daughter of a gentleman, who, touched by the preaching of Gerard the Great, had turned to God with the simple whole-heartedness of the Middle Ages, and we are told that henceforth he wore a hair shirt under his rich clothes, and cut off the soles of his shoes so as to go barefoot without attracting attention. "His fervour caused him to advance daily in virtue," says the Chronicle, "and gave forth a sweet odour to God."

He would have wished to see his youngest daughter, Salome, whom he loved most dearly, follow him in his devout practices, but she, being now fourteen and according to the ideas of the time "of a suitable age to accompany her sisters to worldly feasts," took great pleasure in them. The maid was comely and of a good stature, and loved to set off her natural advantages by the gay apparel which became her well; she frankly enjoyed the company of the "great Lords" whom she met at banquet, tournament, and hunting-party, and the grave admonitions of her father as to the vanity of earthly things seem to have had little influence on the worldly and high-spirited girl, for when she accompanied him to church "she would pray God to give her for her lot great honour and abundance of riches." Perhaps the simplicity with which she asked for what was the genuine desire of her heart was more pleasing to God than the petitions, sometimes read out of printed books, for sufferings and humiliations dear to the Saints, but which those who ask for them are far indeed from desiring. The convent Chronicler tells us that "Our beloved Lord heard her prayer, but in another manner than was her meaning, for He gave her honour and riches of a nobler kind than those for which she begged."

A Jubilee had been proclaimed by Urban VI for the year 1390, and Salome, who was now twenty, wished to go to Rome to gain the indulgence, the desire of change and the excitement of the long journey perhaps influencing her as much as piety. An interior voice seemed to warn her that it was not the Will of God that she should go, but unaccustomed to such spiritual experiences, she heeded it not, and set out for Rome. But the strange sense of trouble persisting, in passing through the town of Zwolle, she felt urged to seek ghostly counsel. The priest to whom she addressed herself was none other than the Prior of the Canons Regular of the Monastery of Bethlehem, who saw clearly that God had special designs on this gifted but wayward soul. He told her to give up the journey and to go and present herself to the Sisters of Master Gerard's house at Deventer, whither he himself conducted her. Salome submitted to his guidance with the perfect docility which was henceforth to characterize this naturally wilful girl; but the good Sisters were startled by the worldly appearance of the candidate for admission among them, and they insisted on her first spending some time in the house of a pious woman in Deventer, where her vocation might be tested. In spite of great temptations, Salome returned no more to her father's house: "She was strong," says the Chronicle, "in the love of Him Who had called her," and in her difficulties she consulted Master Florentius, who confirmed her in her trust that "He Who was calling her to His vineyard would rule, instruct, and defend her." Having entered among the Sisters, the ardent spirit which had led her to desire "great honour and abundant riches," was now turned entirely to heavenly things. "All her desire was to be silent, to be unnoticed, to humble herself and to remember God;* and she loved to spin because this work was lowly and hindered her not from applying her soul to Him." While still very young, she was elected "Mistress," in spite of her prayers and tears, and governed the house with admirable wisdom, showing motherly kindness to all. But after she had been re-elected for eighteen consecutive years, her desire to lay down her charge became so great that she left Master Gerard's house to enter the Monastery just founded at Diepenveen, for she deemed it impossible that any there should ever think of her for such an office; she even begged to be received as a lay-Sister, but this was refused her.

Though now about forty years of age, and having been so long Superior, she went through her noviceship with the utmost simplicity and docility, and, "having learnt the Psalter by heart in her childhood, this now stood her in good stead." But the honours she had once longed for, and had now learnt to dread, were soon to be again her lot. In 1408, after only two years of profession, she was appointed novice-mistress, in the following year sub-prioress, and in 1412 she was elected Prioress.

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* "I remember God . . . the Eternal, Supreme, and All Magnificent God."—*Blessed John Ruysbroeck.*

On this occasion Salome's determined will seems once more to have asserted itself, for the Chronicle tells us that it was no light task to persuade her to consent thereunto; all the Fathers of Deventer exhorted and reasoned with her, till they declared they were full weary, as after some great labour.

The nuns of Diepenveen found in her a mother, who looked on them as children whom God had given unto her care, and in her instructions the love of God, which burnt in her heart, so flamed forth that it kindled the like flame in the hearts of her hearers; she exhorted them especially to perfect abnegation of themselves, to make themselves little and humble for Christ's sake, loving to be subject and to take the lowest place; she would urge them to believe in the virtues of their Sisters, pondering on them in their hearts, and humbling themselves for lacking the same.

She taught them to keep their hearts ever fixed on God, and always to " think of the Lord in goodness,"* and if He deprived them of sensible love and attraction, making them feel their incapacity and uselessness, they were to embrace such a state willingly, cleaving to their Lord with love, and holding for certain that thereby they would please Him, and receive from Him special graces and profound peace. They were to serve Him with joy, ever bearing in mind that " He loveth a cheerful giver."†

The Sisters corresponded in such full measure to her teaching that the Chronicle tells us that, " knowing how her daughters hungered for humiliations, she would reprehend them both at Chapter and at other times in order to satisfy their desire, but sometimes it would happen that even her watchful eye could find nothing to reprove in their behaviour, so that she wist not where to find the bread for which her children were anhungered."

Silence was much loved in the Community, and humility and charity made the Sisters seek to serve one another, so that it would often happen that one would find her work done though she knew not by whom, and if there were a lowly and a disagreeable task, or a less good implement, they would vie for it as for something greatly desirable. Their aim was to "walk in the King's High Way, with entire forgetfulness of what pertaineth to self, whether interiorly or exteriorly."

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* Wisdom i 1.

† 2 Cor. ix 7.

The convent cat plays its part in the annals. The Ancren Riwle written for Augustinian nuns in the thirteenth century had laid down the rule: "Ye ne schulen habben no best bute kat one."

The nuns of Diepenveen had their "kat one," and its presence seems to have been very necessary, for the Chronicle informs us that it had eaten so many rats that it fell sick. The nuns referred the matter to Mother Salome, whose method of dealing with the difficulty reminds us of St Francis and the wolf of Gubbio. She called for the delinquent and gravely forbade her henceforth to eat so much as a single rat! The Chronicler admits that the Sisters did not entertain any hope of amendment from this admonition; as for the increase of the plague of rats, it seems to have been the least of their preoccupations; but what was their surprise and satisfaction when they saw the cat that day "enter the refectory and catch there, not only rats, but also moles, without ever attempting to eat them," but having killed them she would dutifully lay them at the place where Mother Salome was accustomed to sit. Evidently these Canonesses and their Prioress were made of sterner stuff than Chaucer's Prioress, who was:

> "so pitous
> She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous
> Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde."

Indeed, there is little resemblance between his picture of a contemporary Prioress with her wimple "yseemly pinched," her "smale coral bedes aboute hire arm," loving to "contrefeten cheer of court," and the true followers of Lady Poverty in the convent of Diepenveen, where according to the Rule "she was esteemed richest who could best bear the want of exterior things" (*Rule of St Augustine*, chap. iii).

Mother Salome, like all lovers of Poverty, had an unbounded confidence in God's Providence, so that she never refused any who asked to be received among the Sisters, provided there were signs of a true vocation. Even the holy Prior of Windesheim, John of Heusden, whose duty it was to have a care not only of the spiritual, but also of the temporal prosperity of the cloister, feared that she exceeded the bounds of prudence, and came one day to remonstrate with her on the subject. But she so defended the cause of the poor Brides of Christ that he returned to Windesheim saying to himself: "For what manner of man have I taken Our Lord? And how could I have so little faith as to think that He could maintain only a certain number of persons, and no more?" So from that time he consented to the reception of as many as Mother Salome thought fit, and soon there were fifty nuns in the convent.

Yet, to try her, God permitted that grave exterior difficulties should befall the cloister, and Salome's soul was disquieted within her, but never did Our Lord make her experience the joy of close union with Him more than at this time. He left to no other the charge of consoling her, but "with gentle voice He spoke full lovingly unto her, saying: 'Keep thy soul in peace, my beloved. I will have care of that which troubled thee.'" And from that day her confidence was so great that she would say that "she was confirmed in trust."

Though the house was very poor, "in her time there was ever corn in the granary, bread in the oven, provisions in the cellar, and spiritual mirth and fervour in the hearts of the Sisters." One year, when there was a great scarcity throughout the land, and the small piece of ground belonging to the convent had produced but scanty measure of corn, she nevertheless divided this little with the poor. On this occasion she was reproved by Father Henry of Haardwyck,* but she assured him God would not allow them to want, and the little store of wheat and barley which had been reserved for the nuns was so multiplied that it seemed that what they took from it was replaced, and the field belonging to the Community produced in the following year seven hundred measures of corn above what was usual; so plentiful indeed was the harvest that it equalled in value the whole price of the field.

As the fame of the holiness of the Prioress of Diepenveen became noised abroad, many of the town, both gentlemen and ladies, would come to her for spiritual help, and she received them right courteously, and would minister ghostly counsel to them, yet she but lent herself to exterior works of charity, giving herself only to God. Though weakly in body, the greatness of her love gave her strength to observe the Rule of the Order, and she failed not in attendance at the night office; " the love of God," adds the Chronicler, " imparteth strength to keep the Rule to such souls as the Lord ruleth." During the Divine Office the nuns were fain sometimes to raise their eyes to see the face of their Prioress all lit up with the love that consumed her heart. To one was granted a vision in which she saw, as it were, a great fire from which flames of fiery brilliance seemed to shoot upwards even unto heaven, and Our Lord told her that the soul of His beloved was plunged seven times a day into the like glowing flame and shining light while it was engaged in His praises before the face of God.

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* Professed at Windesheim in 1414.

Humility and sweetness were the most marked virtues of Mother Salome, "though she was by nature of a high spirit and easily moved"; she would accuse herself of faults of impatience, which only herself could perceive, and these she confessed with such deep sorrow that the Sister who came after her to confess would find the ledge of the little window all besprinkled with her tears.

She had a tender devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament, and it happened once on the feast of Pentecost, in the year 1416, that a novice saw her go to receive Our Lord's Body holding a lighted taper in her hand, and the novice wondered within herself that she had never noticed it before, and then she reflected that it was doubtless the custom for the Prioress thus to carry a candle on high feasts. But some time after, being appointed to help in the Sacristy, as she was busy with the candles, she spoke to the custress* of this custom, who laughed at her simplicity, for such a thing was never done. The novice kept silence, but she understood that the lighted taper that she had seen betokened the fervour with which Mother Salome approached Our Lord in His Sacrament.

The priest who communicated the Sisters confessed that he had often undergone great anguish of mind, for when he was about to give Holy Communion to Mother Salome, the Host would escape from his hands, and while he was troubled, fearing that It had fallen to the ground, the Mother would rise from her knees and return to her stall, bearing with her the Lord and Spouse of her heart.

* Sacristan. In Dutch *Koster* (from Latin *custos*) with a feminine form *kosteres*. The word *custress* has evidently been formed from it, and is still used in the English Monasteries, which trace their descent from Diepenveen. The place where the sacred vessels and vestments are kept is called the "custry."

It was only when she had reached the age of eighty-two that she at length obtained consent to her earnest, and oft repeated, request to be absolved from the Office of Prioress. This was on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in 1446, and from that day she led the common life with the utmost humility, "as if she had been a simple novice," says the Chronicle; and she would often exclaim: "Ah! Would that I could indeed begin again!" for she said that her life had not been according to the greatness of the desires with which God had inspired her, and that it had indeed fallen below the ideal He had set before her.

But her short remaining time was full of edification to the Community, for "she went forward, as she had taught, in pure obedience, assiduous to the common work, never meddling with the correction of others, nor with giving advice to Superiors; most exact in her silence, yet when those who came to her had leave to speak, she would sweetly give them ghostly counsel."

In her last illness she became more and more absorbed in God, watching lovingly for the coming of the Bridegroom. She had often prayed that the Holy Eucharist might be the last Food to pass her lips, and so it befell. Just before the end one of the Sisters approached her in kindly wise, telling her to take refuge in the sweet love-worthy Heart of Jesus Christ, which had been the object of her devotion on earth; a few minutes later, one of the nuns who was not present, for it was near midnight, beheld a bright light, and had an inward conviction that her holy Mother was dying. On entering the sick-room, she found it full of the Sisters, "for all would be present at the glorious nuptials which were about to be celebrated in Eternity. As midnight struck, the prayers for the agonizing were begun, but the Bridegroom waited not for them to be ended, but hastened to fetch away His beloved to conduct her from the long road of her exile, to that heavenly city Jerusalem, where she might enjoy His presence and contemplate Him face to face eternally."

It was October 17, 1449. The Chronicle tells of apparitions and graces received through her intercession "too numerous to be recorded."

The year in which Mother Salome had been elected Prioress there came to Diepenveen one whose story is charmingly told in the old Dutch Chronicle; it must be much abbreviated here, but the pictures which it gives of life in the fifteenth century, both in the world and the cloister, are too graphic to be altogether omitted.

Katharine van Naaldwyck was the daughter of the Lord Grand Marshal of Holland, and was a favourite in the palace whither she often accompanied her father. The Count of Holland and Hainault, William IV, and his wife, Margaret of Burgundy, daughter of Philip the Bold, would have her accept the post of lady-in-waiting to their daughter Jacqueline of Bavaria. The dramatic story of this famous princess, to whom the most brilliant destiny seemed promised, but whose life was to be a series of faults and misfortunes,* contrasts strangely with the account of the friend of her happier days in the pages of the Chronicle of Diepenveen.

Sister Katharine van Naaldwyck refused to be maid of honour to the Lady of Holland, choosing rather to go forth from her father's house at the voice of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ the Spouse of virgins. Her parents were loath to let her depart, for they loved her tenderly, she being a maid full winsome and mild, who had just reached her seventeenth year.

But they were devout and God-fearing, and durst not thwart her holy purpose, so with hearts heavy with a great sadness they bade her come to them, and her father said unto her: "Daughter, go thou to the cloister and consider diligently the manner of life of the Sisters, and, if it like thee well, so tarry thou with them, persevering in God's holy service, for such is also our good pleasure. But if the cloister content thee not, return hither to us, and we will welcome thee gladly." Thus spoke the good knight, and he turned away his face, that she might not see his tears, and the lady, her mother, swooned, so great was her sorrow. But Katharine made answer: "Lord my father, with God's help I hope to remain steadfast." And she hastened away, for she was sore grieved to leave such loving parents.

That the leave-taking might be less hard to bear, it was settled that the maid should go to the house of her uncle and aunt, and that, after making all necessary arrangements with the father who had charge of Diepenveen, they should conduct her thither, for her father's heart failed him at the very thought of such a parting. Meanwhile, he sought such solace as the company of his friends and the pleasure of the chase could afford him. "But it fell out one day, when he had gone to hunt with a great party of knights and nobles and they had ridden far, that he beheld his daughter on her way to Diepenveen, and her aunt and the women of her household were with her. And when the knight cast his eyes on Katharine, his countenance changed and became dead-pale, so that the knights that rode with him wondered and said: 'Lord Henry, what aileth thee? What hath befallen thee?' He pushing forward, drew nigh to his daughter and clasped her straitly in his arms, but she could scarce speak a word, for it seemed to her that her heart was like to stop beating. Then she rode forward and came to Diepenveen on the Octave day of our holy Father St Augustine (September 4), and the Prior of Windesheim was there to greet her, and with him were many of his monks, and she besought them most humbly that she might join the Sisters without delay. And as she had the Latin tongue well and could sing with a fair voice, the Rector consented thereto; so on the third day after St Augustine's Octave, she received the Holy Habit.

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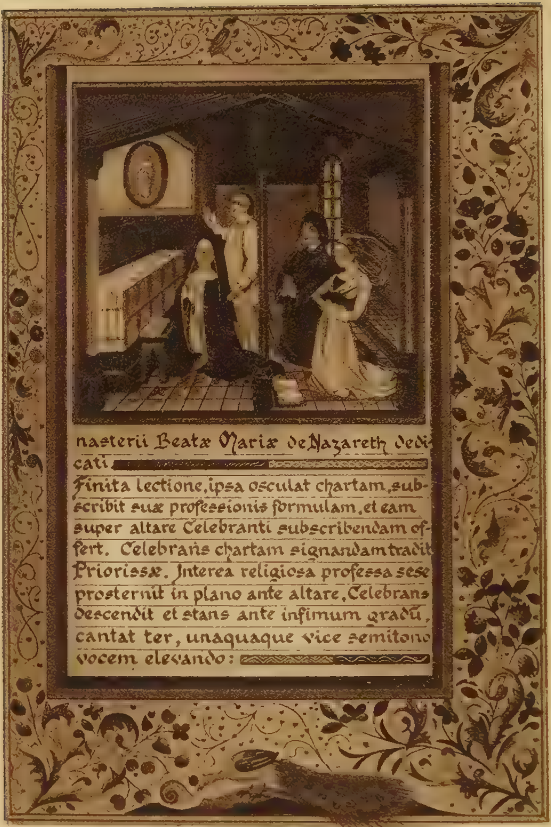
* She was betrothed at the age of four to Jean de Touraine, son of Charles VI of France, who was sent to be brought up at the Court of Holland. He became Dauphin by the death of his elder brother in 1415. Jacqueline, left a widow when only sixteen, married John IV of Brabant in 1418. The marriage was unhappy, and escaping from him she fled to England, where she scandalously married Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, brother to Henry V. After many adventures she contracted a fourth marriage with a private gentleman, Frank van Borselen, and died in 1436.

"She was a maid exceedingly comely and fair, and she was most gloriously apparelled, for she wore a rich mantle of blue, the sleeves whereof were open and reaching to the ground, and they were adorned with rows of double hooks of gold, to which there hung many gold sequins; the waist band was likewise of gold, very fair, and she wore a costly necklace and ornaments on her head of gold and precious stones.

"But that which was most to be admired in her, and for which God, Who had given her all these good things, was chiefly to be praised, was the joy and gladness with which she forsook all, that she might embrace a poor and lowly state for God's love, and seeing this both the Rector and the Sisters rejoiced.

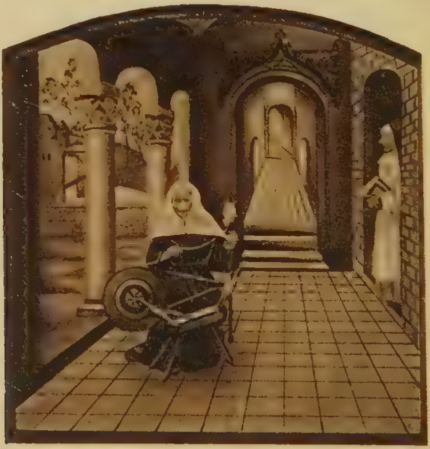
"So a Mass of the Holy Ghost being sung, she was led up to the altar and exchanged her costly mantle for the white rochet of the Order; though there was a great concourse of people, yet many saw not the ceremony for weeping, for all were moved at beholding one of such



nasterii Beatæ Mariæ de Nazareth dedicati

Finita lectione, ipsa osculat chartam, subscribit suæ professionis formulam, et eam super altare Celebranti subscribendam offert. Celebrans chartam signandam tradit Priorissæ. Interea religiosa professa sese prosternit in plano ante altare, Celebrans descendit et stans ante infimum gradū, cantat ter, unaquaque vice semitono vocem elevando:

FROM CEREMONY BOOK, ENGLISH CONVENT, BRUGES



SHOWING HABIT WORN BY POSTULANTS

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tender years undertake so hard and mean a life; even our Rector, Father John Brinkerink, had much ado to chant the Gospel for the tears that choked his voice. But she held her heart bravely, and cheerfully took upon her the sweet yoke of Christ, the Divine Spouse of her soul.

"The Mass being ended, she was led back to the enclosure, and her mantle was laid upon the steps as she was about to ascend and the Father Rector, making her a sign that she was to walk thereon, she blithely trod it under foot. The Prioress and all the Sisters stood ready to receive her, and she followed them to the Choir, where she prayed so devoutly and in her bliss sang so lustily that she could be heard above all the others.

"Her friends and all the noble company bade her farewell, and returned to tell her parents how it fared with her, and how kindly she had been received by the Sisters of Diepenveen, and how they rejoiced thereat. Then said the Lord her father: ' Now must I send a goodly alms to the Sisters,' and he began to dive so deep into his coffers that some beholding this remonstrated, saying: ' Let my Lord remember he hath yet other children.' But he heeded not, and sent the nuns much monies—to wit, one hundred florins of Holland.

"Meanwhile, Sister Katharine was most diligent in doing and leaving such things as the Constitutions command or forbid, pondering frequently on Our Saviour's bitter death and Passion, that she might learn what it behoved her to suffer in return for so much love, and, forgetting her people and her father's house, she inclined her ear to listen to what the Divine Bridegroom spoke to her heart.

"The year of her probation being completed, Katharine made her profession on the morrow of our Holy Father's Octave, in the year of Our Lord 1413, she being then eighteen.

"A great company of her friends and kinsfolk came to Diepenveen, and the Lady her mother seeing her daughter's happiness and the goodness of the Sisters to her, knew not how to show her thankfulness. She bestowed many costly gifts upon the Community, and that the whole convent might have good cheer on such a day, she obtained license from the Prior of Windesheim to provide roast goose (for it was contrary to our custom to eat roast flesh); the Prior willingly granted the leave, and she being a woman full motherly and homely, would herself attend to the dressing of the meal.

"Now Katharine's younger sister, Margaret by name, being but fourteen years of age, was minded to stay in the cloister with her, to which her righteous parents likewise consented, sending a gift of one hundred nobles, and willingly yielding up their daughters to the service of God, and truly this was the work of grace and not of nature.

"Sister Katharine, after her profession, wrote a copy of the Rule of St Augustine, that holding it always by her she might lay it up the better in her heart, for she had a most tender love towards our holy Father; to read his works, or to hear them read, was delightsome to her, and her face betokened the joy of her heart whenever she heard him discoursed of.

"Indeed she had a great devotion to all the saints of God, and would ponder upon their words and on their sufferings for Christ, so that when the Office was over she could but with difficulty be gotten from the Choir, so much did she desire to prolong her converse with her heavenly friends.

" She had always by her one or two books of Scripture that she might study now in one, now in the other, for she had well the Latin tongue. The Sisters, therefore, begged the ' Mater ' leave for to make her a little basket wherein to hold her books; and the ' Mater ' said ' Yea,' and so Sister Katharine was able to carry her books with her to the Choir, to the spinning chamber, and to her cell."

Spinning was a favourite occupation of hers, " because it is a lowly work, and left her free to think of the things of God," and she would take her spinning wheel in the garden in her leisure time, so as to be in solitude with her Beloved. But after some years it became evident that the Sisters were thinking of her for the office of Subprioress, which became vacant when Katharine was but twenty-six, and in hopes of escaping the dignity she would betake herself to the garden as had been her wont, but instead of spinning while she held converse with God, she would run after butterflies, so that the Sisters, seeing her, might consider her light and childish. The innocent subterfuge did not succeed, and Katharine was appointed Subprioress, and had ever " one heart and one mind" with the Prioress, Mother Salome, " with whom," says the Chronicle, " she was like a child with her mother." Indeed, before she was thirty, no fewer than three convents of the Order had asked to have her as Prioress, but Superiors would never allow her to leave Diepenveen, probably counting on her for succeeding Mother Salome.

At one time she was the novice-mistress of her sister Margaret, and "she taught her how to empty her heart of self, and to turn entirely to God." Margaret was an apt scholar, and the love of these two sisters for one another reminds us of that between the young Agnes of Assisi and her "sweetest Sister and Mother," St Clare, whom she joined at San Damiano, at the age of fourteen.* Margaret was to be made perfect in a short space; of her as of Katharine we read that she was a model of obedience, humility, and self-abnegation, and the nuns took pleasure in hearing them talk together, for they seemed like two seraphim, mutually inflaming each other to a still greater love of God.

They were foremost in all practices of humility, kissing the feet of their Sisters, and accusing themselves of their faults with so much devotion, that it kindled the desire of humility in the hearts of those who heard them, and when the "Mater" gave any admonition they would kneel down with joined hands, and acknowledge their faults, as the manner is, and would obey all her recommendations to the letter.

Though they had been "so delicately nurtured," they were ever eager to take their share in the hardest work, baking, brewing, and washing the clothes; the nuns knowing that they were but weakly in body, tried to prevent their overtaxing their strength, but it was not easy to restrain them; and Sister Margaret having gone to work in the kitchen one day when there was high festival at Diepenveen,† went to help a Sister whom she saw carrying a heavy pot, and in doing so broke a blood-vessel.

From that day her health declined, and it became clear that she would soon be with her Lord in Heaven, but Sister Katharine was sore grieved, for she loved her most tenderly, yet would she have hidden her sorrow, for she would not give her pain; but she could not so wholly dissemble it but that Margaret perceived it and quietly chode her elder, saying: "Wouldst thou keep me from my rest? for thou seest that in this world I can no longer work, but am good for naught." And Katharine answered: "Beloved sister, I would not keep thee longer than God willeth." It was on the feast of St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins that the Bridegroom came to call His bride to that eternal rest for which she longed; the Sisters thought that in her last moments she saw St Ursula and her companions, for when the nuns were not present she asked the Sister who watched her who were those in white who surrounded her bed; now in the convent there was a custom that, when a nun died, eleven thousand Paternosters were said, the number being divided among all the Canonesses, to beg St Ursula to protect at the hour of death the next one who should die.*

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* In our days the holy little Carmelite, Blessed Teresa of the Child Jesus, wrote to her much-loved Sister and Prioress, Mother Agnes of Jesus: Has anyone ever upbraided brothers who fought side by side, or together won the martyr's palm? A heart given to God loses nothing of its natural affection; on the contrary, this affection grows stronger by becoming purer and more spiritual."

† "It was on the feast of St James the Apostle [July 25], and on that day twelve Sisters were professed, and there were many guests."

Sister Margaret was but twenty-five years of age, and had been ten years professed. Katharine, with her own hands, clothed her in the habit in which she was to be buried and laid her in her coffin.

That night a Brother of the Order, praying in his cell an hour after midnight, had a vision in which he beheld a beautiful young maiden in white raiment shining as the sun, led before the throne of God by two nuns clothed also in white and wearing black veils. The vision is recounted at length in the Chronicle; it is thoroughly medieval in character, and, like those with which we are familiar in the works of St Gertrude, it is redolent of the Liturgy. The Angels and Saints sing antiphons, responses, and hymns, the vesture of the bride is adorned with golden roses, and she wears a crown of roses white and red; in the centre of each white rose is a fair sapphire, and in the red a flashing ruby, and the maiden bears a palm in her hand. St John the Evangelist leads Our Lady, who is followed by a multitude of virgins singing, "After her shall virgins be led unto the King." Our Lord rises from His throne and clasps the soul of Margaret in His arms, saying: "Come, my bride, whose beauty I have greatly desired." "And the dear Mother of God casts her mantle around her Son and His Bride, and St John the Evangelist and all the Angels and Saints sang: 'Jesu corona virginum.' Then the sweet Mother Mary lifted up her mantle and all the virgins broke forth in glad thanksgiving singing: 'We have come through fire and water, and thou hast brought us to a place of refreshment.' And the two nuns who accompanied the maiden turned to the Brother who witnessed this sight and said to him: 'Brother, knowest thou who is this bride, and who we are?' And he answered, 'Yea,' for though till that moment he had been as one amazed on account of the exceeding glory, he now recognized the Prioress of our house at Utrecht, and another nun of our Order who had lately died, with Sister Margaret van Naaldwyck.

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* The practice still exists of saying a number of *Paters* and *Aves* for "the soul Our Lord designs to take next out of this world, that she may live so as to die in His grace and favour, and speedily enjoy His Presence in eternal bliss. Each one will say the *Paters* and *Aves* appointed for them." (*Customs of the English Canonesses Regular.*)

"And they spoke to him and said: 'O Brother, we have worked a little and we have won a great rest. What matters it to us now that on earth we had troubles and anguish of spirit? Now we know that is true which the Apostle saith, that the tribulations of this world are not worthy to be compared to the weight of glory that shall be revealed. If men but knew what the Lord hath laid up for those who love Him in the simplicity of their hearts, they would count nothing too heavy to bear for His sake.'"

We must not linger too long over the remaining years of Sister Katharine. Her holiness and her gift of counsel being noised abroad, many came to her for help, and the Prior of Windesheim would send her troubled or scrupulous Brothers that she might lead them into the way of peace. She had a special power of making the joys or sorrows of others her own; she was a great peacemaker and so charitable to the poor that they called her their mother, and she was loved by all, for she ever wished joy to others and did all she could to procure it for them. Her love of the Divine Office and of inward converse with God grew with the years, so that she found the time for prayer always too short, and would say that she would not give up even a few minutes of it for all the pleasures of the world. She took care that Our Lord should be her Heaven,* says the Chronicle, for she ever delighted in His service.

Yet that her fidelity might be tested and be made known, God sent her many trials, both from within and without; she had also frequent bodily sickness and desolation of soul.

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* *Cf.* Mother Juliana: "Thou art my Heaven."

During the interdict that was laid on the Diocese of Utrecht in the year 1425, on account of the Bishop Rudolph of Diepholt, she suffered keenly from the deprivation of spiritual help and especially from that of Holy Communion, which could be administered but very rarely, yet during this time of trial she encouraged both her Sisters and those outside the convent, and even priests, to make progress in the love of God, and He was preparing His faithful Spouse for the crowning grace of her life.

On the eve of St Agnes of that same year, when she had retired to her cell for the few hours' rest before Matins, reflecting that she would not be able to receive Our Lord on the morrow, which was so great a feast, she could not sleep for the vehemence of her desire to be united to her Bridegroom Jesus Christ. Then in a transport of love she renewed her espousals with Him, and "He showed her all that pertaineth to spiritual marriage."*

In the morning, Katharine sought the Prioress, and told her of the grace with which she had been favoured, and of her desire for Holy Communion. And the Mother, too, was filled with joy, and they conversed together of the Divine Nuptials, forgetful of all earthly things, and so the Sisters found them all inflamed with Divine Love. "Then the 'Mater' sent Sister Katharine to our father to beg him to allow the nuns and the young child, who was with them, to communicate on the feast of St Agnes, and Father Egbert granting her desire, Mother Salome assembled the whole Community in the Chapter House, and told them what grace they were about to receive;

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* "When the Bride shall have been perfected, He will make with her a spiritual marriage; and they two shall be, not one flesh, but one spirit, according to the saying of the Apostle: 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit'" (St Bernard's Fifty-First Sermon on the Canticle of Canticles; translation by Eales). "That which God here in an instant communicates to the soul is so great a secret, and a grace so sublime; and that which she feels a delight so excessive and sweet that I know not what to resemble it to. . . . It cannot be further expressed than that (as far as can be discerned and understood) the Spirit of such a Soul is made one thing with God; for being Himself also a Spirit, His Majesty hath vouchsafed to discover the love He bears us, letting some persons understand how far it extends, that we may praise His Greatness, who hath been pleased in such sort to unite Himself to a creature; that as in Wedlock the parties joined can no longer be separated, so He will never be separated from her."—*St Teresa : The Interior Castle. The Seventh Mansion*, chap. ii (Abraham Woodhead's translation, 1675).

Ruysbroeck treats of this transforming union in his *Splendour of the Spiritual Espousals.*

and the hearts of all were set on fire with a loving desire to renew the fervour with which they made their vows and gave themselves to God."

The Chronicler here breaks out into an epithalamium of the kind in which the mystics of the Middle Ages delighted: The bride is not to appear in torn garments before so noble a Bridegroom, but to clothe herself with His Holy Will; the bridal chamber is the heart of the bride, and she is to close its doors, so as to be alone with her Bridegroom and keep Him ever with her. But the passage is long, and is paralleled in many a page of the works of Medieval Mystics; we must pass on to give the simple account of the last hours on earth of this chosen soul.

In the year of Our Lord 1443, Sister Katharine fell into a grievous sickness, and when the Sisters showed compassion for her pains she would say: "These sufferings are not to be compared to what I have borne in striving against my passions." The "Mater" was with her in her agony, and she spoke sweetly to her, telling her that she should now rest in the Wounds of Our Lord, and put her trust in His merits, and she answered: "Beloved Mother, that will I gladly do." On the feast of St Lucy, after the *Ave Maria* had been rung,* the Sisters were all gathered round her to help her by their prayers. She lost consciousness some time before her death, and when she returned to herself "she bowed her head with great humility and reverence towards the side where the 'Mater' was sitting, and her countenance became most beautiful, and she spoke as to some dear friend near her with whom she appeared to be conversing, but we could not understand what she said." Sister Lysbeth, who was close by her bedside, was asked to speak to her, but she said: "What shall I ask her or what say? . . . for her face telleth sufficiently that she hath by her a Consoler who is more dear to her than us all." But they, insisting, Sister Lysbeth said: "Sister Katharine, is the Lord there?" And at these words Sister Katharine threw back her head a little, and gave three gentle sighs as of longing to follow someone who was escaping from her. And thus she gave up her holy soul to God on the eve of St Lucy's Day, after the hour of Compline. She was forty-nine years of age, and thirty-one years professed, and she was buried in the grave of her sister Margaret on the north side of the transept."

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* The Angelus.

Katharine had prayed that she might die in the "golden age" of Diepenveen, and her wish was granted, for the Priorate of Mother Salome has ever been looked back to as a time when the full development of the spiritual life and the faithful observance of Rule were combined with that enthusiasm, that freshness and charm which mark the early days of religious Congregations as of human lives—a spring-time flooded with golden sunlight in which the fruits of a later period ripen without any touch of the latent sadness of autumn.

THE MARTYRS OF GORCUM

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XI

A RED SUNSET

THE MARTYRS OF GORCUM AND THE LAST DAYS OF WINDESHEIM

THE Congregation of Windesheim had been instituted during the dark days of the great Western Schism; its founders were devoted champions of the Roman Pontiff,* and the Canons in the Low Countries had ever remained faithful to the tradition of obedience and loyalty to the Holy See. The great storm which attacked the Church in the sixteenth century was to destroy their Congregation, as it had swept away in its devastating course so much that was noble and venerable. True, we shall find a few houses struggling for existence, even so late as the eighteenth century, and it was only in 1811 that the last Canon Regular of Windesheim died in the Monastery of Freuswegen,† once governed by the saintly Prior Henry Loder, and so celebrated for its fervour that it was known as the Paradise of Westphalia. But with the religious persecution of the sixteenth century in Holland, the glory of Windesheim departed; its once flourishing Monasteries became heaps of smoking ruins or were converted into Protestant churches, as was the case with the Mother House itself.

While Thomas à Kempis was still leading his life of peaceful seclusion at Mount St Agnes, the movement known as the Renaissance had begun, and five years before his death a child was born who was to be one of its foremost protagonists. Erasmus, a penniless student as Thomas à Kempis had been, like him, studied in the school of Deventer, and passed from thence into the care of the Canons Regular, among whom he was professed in the Monastery of Emmaus at Stein, near Gouda. But though so far there was much similarity in their exterior lives, a greater contrast can scarcely be conceived than existed between the spirit of the author of the *Imitation* and that of the writer of the *Praise of Folly*. À Kempis had " flown to the Cloister at the first call of the Lord, lest he should hear Him saying: 'I called thee and thou wouldst not listen to My voice' ";* Erasmus entered the Order without vocation, urged by his guardians to adopt a course of life which secured him from want,† and his masters seem to have been too ready to believe that his studious disposition fitted him for the monastic state. Later on he bitterly blamed the undue influence brought to bear upon a mere boy of nineteen; the observances of the religious life were hateful to him, and he eagerly took the first opportunity which occurred of freeing himself from them without scandal, when Henry de Bergues, Bishop of Cambrai, struck by the brilliant talents of the young Canon, asked for him as his secretary, and soon after sent him to pursue his studies in Paris. The habit of the Canons Regular was laid aside, and in 1514 he obtained from the Pope release from obligations incurred under pressure, and for which he was totally unfit. Indeed, there was nothing in common between the vain and ostentatious humanist seeking eagerly for the shadow of a great name, and a Congregation whose members sought as eagerly to lead a life hidden with Christ in God.

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* See chapter on Gerard Groote and his work, p. 15.

† It was near Nordhorn in the Diocese of Münster, and, being situated in a wood, was called in its earlier days "Marienwald," Mary's Wood.

In 1497 Erasmus went for three years to England, and was received at Oxford by the Augustinian Prior of St Mary's, Richard Charnock.‡ In London he made the acquaintance of Thomas More, who was to become his lifelong friend. During subsequent visits he was welcomed to the Chancellor's house at Chelsea as to a home, and it is to his pen that we owe many charming pictures of the domestic life of the future martyr. Little could the ex-Canon of Windesheim or the family at Chelsea foresee that, before many years had passed, the father round whom all their happiness centred would die on the scaffold, and that his adopted child, Margaret Giggs,* would seek a refuge in the Low Countries, where her daughter would embrace the observance of those very Constitutions which Erasmus had abandoned. The storm, indeed, was gathering rapidly, and the works of Erasmus himself were doing incalculable harm by their bitter sarcasm, their anti-ecclesiastical bias and rationalistic tendencies, though Cardinal Gasquet exonerates him from any connection or sympathy with Lutheranism as such.†

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* *Life of à Kempis*, by Badius Ascensius, Douay, 1635.

† Both his parents died of the plague when he was but twelve years old, and he had been committed to the care of three guardians, who seem to have been anxious to get rid of their charge. His father's name was Gerard, and he himself bore the name of Gerrit Gerritzoon till he adopted both a Latin and a Greek form of the name and became known as Desiderius Erasmus. Though the ex-Canon was ever ready to attack the Religious Orders with biting sarcasm, he never made any accusation of evil living against his former brethren at Emmaus and, indeed, he says in a letter to the Prior that he left his profession not because he had any fault to find with it, but because he would not be a scandal to the Order, while, as Miss Stone remarks in *Studies from Court and Cloister*, his very complaint that his health could not stand the fish diet, the long prayer, fasts, and vigils points to austerity of life and strict observance of the monastic rule.

‡ " One of the most cultivated scholars then resident at Oxford " (*History of Oxford University*, p. 393, by Sir H. Maxwell Lyte). See also p. 304: " In 1421 the Augustinian Canons presented a petition to Henry V stating that they alone of all the Religious Orders had

While Erasmus was at Chelsea writing his *Praise of Folly*, the new heresy was spreading rapidly in his own country, which was peculiarly open to its inroads, on account of the commercial intercourse between Holland and Germany, and long before his death in 1536 the Congregation of Windesheim had begun to suffer from the effects of the terrible disorders to which the Low Countries fell a prey even under the strong government of Charles V.

From 1517 to 1533 not a single profession at Windesheim is recorded, and several Houses of the Order were closed, especially in Germany. In 1551 it was decided in a general Chapter to send religious from Brabant into Germany to save, if possible, the Monasteries there, and to prevent their passing, after the dispersion of their inmates, into the hands of the Lutheran nobles, but the

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no place of study at Oxford, and praying him to buy for them a piece of ground that was then on sale." This was the origin of the foundation of St Mary's College, built in 1435. But the Priory of St Frideswide, founded in the eighth century (later on known as Christ Church), and the Abbey of Oseney, founded in 1129, were both Monasteries of Austin Canons.

* Margaret Giggs, whom Erasmus mentions in a letter written to Budée in 1521, married Dr. Clement; their daughter, also named Margaret, governed St Ursula's, Louvain, for thirty-eight years, and became God's instrument for the foundation of an English Community in which several descendants of Thomas More were professed.

† See *Eve of the Reformation*, p. 185.

attempt does not seem to have met with success. From the year 1559, it was found extremely difficult to assemble the Chapter at the Mother House owing to the disturbed state of the country, and thirteen years later many of the Monasteries of the "Union" or "Circle" of Windesheim were pillaged and burnt. Among them was Eemstein, where, in 1387, the first six Brethren had gone to drink in the spirit and traditions transmitted to that house by one of Ruysbroeck's own disciples.

As early as 1554 Mount St Agnes, the home of the author of the *Imitation*, was pillaged, and part of the building was burnt by the undisciplined bands of fanatical soldiery who roved through the country destroying churches and monasteries; some years later its revenues were granted to the new bishopric of Deventer, and most of the Brethren sought refuge with the Canons of St Martin's at Louvain; the last inmates of Agnietenberg were driven out in 1573 by the troops in rebellion against Philip II of Spain, and in 1581, what still remained of the old Monastery was demolished by order of the municipality of Zwolle.

There were, alas! some sad defections, as in other countries where heresy was triumphant. Thus, John Sartorius, Prior of St Christopher's at Ravensburg, in the Diocese of Mentz, signed a deed by which he and his Community adhered to the Confession of Augsburg, and though Prior Gerard Schild saw his Monastery of Our Lady at Gaesdonck pillaged, and willingly went into exile with many of his subjects, there were others of the Community who apostatized and persecuted their Prior and the Brethren who remained faithful to him and to their faith.

Those were troubled days indeed for the Church in Holland and for the Congregation of Windesheim, and its "first fathers" would have wept at the sight of such defections and over the destruction of their Mother House, which began in 1572, when the people of Zwolle rushed into the church and demolished the altars. Yet the men who had gladly suffered exile for the sake of obedience and loyalty to the Vicar of Christ would have rejoiced to witness the brave testimony borne by many of their spiritual descendants, and God was about to give the Congregation in this, its darkest hour, the crowning glory of martyrdom.

The severe measures taken by the Duke of Alba, whom Philip II had sent to restore order in the Low Countries, and especially the execution of Egmont and Horn in June, 1568, exasperated many, who, till then, had been partisans of the Spanish Government, and made them look on William of Orange as one destined to deliver them from a foreign yoke. On April 1, 1572, the *Gueux de mer*, or "Beggars of the Sea,"* under the noted freebooter William van Lummen, Count de la Marck, took the town of Brielle by a boldly planned surprise, and proclaimed the sovereignty of William. Scenes of unutterable horror ensued, for the men under de la Marck's command were the very dregs of the populace; churches and convents were plundered, altars and statues pulled down, and the sacred vessels were profaned, but the rage of the Calvinist fanatics was especially directed against the Monastery of St Elisabeth (commonly called Ten Rugge), at a short distance from the town. The soldiery having seized one of the Canons, ordered him to cry *Vivent les Gueux*, and on his steady refusal they cut off his ears, one of which they nailed to the door of the church, and the other to the city gate amid brutal jests, and the martyr was finally despatched by heavy blows from the butt-end of their carbines. That same year a religious of the Monastery of our Lady of the New Light was done to death, and the Prior of St Jerome's at Ruremonde, with two of his Canons and a lay-brother, swelled the number of those who died for Christ. But the best known among the many victims of the persecution in Holland are those who suffered at Gorcum on July 9, 1572.

In this glorious band were eleven Franciscans, a Dominican, two Premonstratensians, a Canon Regular, and four of the secular clergy. The Canon Regular, Father John of Oosterwyck, had long been Procurator in the Monastery of St Elisabeth, which had been destroyed a few months previously; but he was now an old man, and for many years had been Director of a Convent of Nuns of his own Order at Gorcum. This Community had once been fervent and prosperous, but had become relaxed, and even its temporal affairs had fallen into disorder. Father John had restored regular observance, and by his instructions had shown the nuns how to make their great poverty contribute to their spiritual advancement; labour, mortification, and prayer again flourished. He himself was noted for his mortification and love of poverty; and in the peaceful cloister of St Elisabeth, a great desire had grown up in his heart of one day dying for Christ; he must have often pondered the words of Thomas à Kempis: "Jesus has now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few that are willing to bear His Cross . . . many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking the Chalice of His Passion. Many reverence His miracles, but few follow the ignominy of His Cross."* When he heard of the martyrdom of a Canon of his own Monastery, he exclaimed: "Would that God would grant me the like grace! Would that I too might so die!" One of the nuns, Sister Ursula, answered with quick deprecation: "God preserve you, Father, from such torments and from the gibbet," for hanging was the ignominious death which the Gueux generally reserved for priests and religious. "Nay," said Father John, "I fear neither pain nor shame, for I should account myself happy to give my life for God."† When the news of the approach of the enemy reached Gorcum, he sent the nuns to a place of safety, while he himself remained to save the convent, if possible, from pillage. The story of how the townsfolk, among whom heresy and disaffection to the Spanish Government were rife, opened their gates to the Sea-beggars, and of how the citadel, which the governor vainly strove to defend, capitulated in the night between June 26 and 27, belongs to history. We are concerned with the martyrs only, who found themselves prisoners in the morning, in spite of the solemn promise given by the Gueux leader that all who sought refuge in the citadel should have life and liberty. Foreseeing that as priests and religious they would be objects of special hatred to the fanatics, they had confessed one to the other during the night, and had all received Holy Communion from the hands of the Curé of Gorcum. The details of their imprisonment, which lasted till their death on July 9, are well known, for among those to whom the palm of martyrdom was offered were two whose courage failed at the last, and who, repenting bitterly afterwards, gave a full account of how their companions had won the crown which their own weakness had forfeited.

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* The origin of the name is said to have been the scornful taunt of one of Margaret of Parma's Councillors who, when a deputation of the nobles of the Netherlands appeared before her in 1566, exclaimed: "Ne craignez pas, Madame, ce ne sont que des gueux."

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* Thomas à Kempis was well known to his Brethren at Brielle, and it was at their request that he wrote his *Life of St Lydwina*.

† *Martyrs de Gorcum*, par l'Abbé Chauvierre (Lethielleux, Paris, 1867).

The prisoners were treated with an even coarser brutality than we read of in the acts of our English Martyrs, and the account gives some idea of what it must have meant to be handed over, as their Master had been before them, to the unrestrained cruelty of men who could find matter for sport in the torments they inflicted on their victims; in many ways we are reminded of the story of the Passion, and a new light seems to be shed on the words of the Evangelist: " Et illudebant ei." The soldiers struck the martyrs so violently on the face that blood gushed from eyes, ears, nose, and mouth; all were prepared for a barbarous scourging when a sudden alarm gave the signal to man the ramparts, but the tormentors returned to invent new horrors: they fastened the cords of the Franciscans round the necks of the Father Guardian and of one of the secular priests, and, dragging them to the open door, threw the ends of the cords over it, and the victims were hoisted as high as possible, and then allowed to drop heavily on the floor; this cruel game was continued till the Father Guardian's neck was one red wound, and he fainted away; then they approached lighted torches to his face, either to ascertain if he were really dead or in order to increase his torture; they thus burnt his beard, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and even thrust a torch into his mouth, burning his palate and tongue, and then left him for dead, but he survived to consummate his martyrdom a few days later. Father John of Oosterwyck was ordered to divulge where the treasures of the convent of which he was Director were hid, while a pistol was held to his breast, but he declared that he was the poor father of a poor family, and gave up the little money he had on him. The favourite time for the soldiers to come and make sport of their victims was after meals, at which they had drunk heavily; they would rush into the prison with such words as: " Let us crucify these makers of God," for the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass were the special theme of their horrible jests. Sometimes they would pretend to make their confession, and kneeling in mockery at the feet of the priests would utter vile blasphemies and tell the most revolting stories in a loud whisper. " Well," said one, after enacting this horrible parody, " what do you say to my confession?" " That I will pray for you," answered Father Willehald, a Franciscan of ninety years of age. At these words, the wretch sprang from his knees and, throwing himself on the old man, dealt him furious blows, which only drew from him a *Deo Gratias*.

A minister was sent to them who attempted to prove by Scripture texts that God had abandoned them, since He sent them no help, but gave them over to their enemies. The martyrs displayed unconquerable trust, but it is clear from many details in the account of their imprisonment and death that several of them were made partners of Christ's Agony in the Garden, sharing to the full in His fear and weariness and heaviness of heart.

Dice were given to the prisoners, and they were told to play, thus to decide in what order they should be hanged; but they refused to obey, the Guardian of the Franciscans offering himself to be the first.

At one o'clock in the morning of July 6, they were embarked for Brielle, where their execution was to take place, but they were first to tread a veritable way of the Cross.

On landing they were conducted to the presence of La Marck, who received them with shouts of laughter as he saw them standing before him, half-clad and bearing marks of the treatment they had undergone. "For what new treachery are you come?" he exclaimed. "Had you not enough to do with your singing of Masses?" Near the landing-place stood a gibbet, and they were ordered to walk round it two and two in procession, headed by the young Franciscan novice, Brother Henry, into whose hands was thrust a banner stolen from some church. The crowd thronged to see the sight, jeering as the martyrs were led round and round the gibbet, and crying: "There is your altar, there you may chant your Masses and practise your idolatry." They were then commanded to sing, and they intoned the *Te Deum* and the *Salve Regina*, the strains of which were heard above the hooting of the multitude, but while the martyrs sang, mounted soldiers rode up and down striking them so that their bare necks and shoulders were soon covered with blood, and even their faces were not spared, the Count de la Marck himself dealing them heavy blows as they passed before the place where he sat on horseback. They were then obliged to march through the town, objects of pitiless mockery to the scum of the people, and it was noticed that even the women showed no compassion; some of them stood at the door of their houses with pails of water into which they dipped their mops, and as the prisoners passed they besprinkled them saying: "Asperges me Domine." On reaching the public square, the order was again given to walk round the gibbet singing canticles; at the end of the *Salve Regina*, one of the priests, by a sudden inspiration, substituted for the usual collect that of the feast of Our Lady of Dolours: "Interveniat pro nobis, quaesumus Domine Deus, nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, apud tuam clementiam gloriosissima Virgo Maria mater tua, cujus sacratissimam animam in hora benedictae passionis, et amarae mortis tuae, doloris gladius pertransivit," and all the martyrs answered, "Amen," and during the recital of this prayer a strange silence fell on the crowd, and not a cry was heard.

The confessors of the Faith were then taken to a prison, where they were thrust into a room of which the floor and walls were covered with filth, emitting an intolerable stench, and here they were left for the night. The following morning some of them were taken before William de la Marck, and offered life if they would renounce their obedience to the Pope, but their answers convinced the Gueux that nothing would make them yield, and at eleven o'clock on the night of July 8 sentence was delivered against them all.

At about one o'clock in the morning of the 9th they were tied two and two by the arms and marched out of the city gates; after some hesitation as to their route, the soldiers took their way towards the ruins of the Monastery of St Elisabeth, and Father John of Oosterwyck realized that he was to die in the very place where he had begun his religious life—where he had first learnt to love God "usque ad contemptum sui."* The martyrs were led into a half-ruined barn, and preparations were made for their death by hanging; as if to give them more resemblance to their Master, they were almost entirely stripped of their clothes. Father Nicholas Pieck, the Guardian of the Franciscans, was the first to die, after having embraced each one of his companions.

This was the moment chosen for a fresh attempt on the constancy of the martyrs, and they had the sorrow of seeing two of those who had endured so much renounce the palm when it was almost within their grasp.†

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* St Augustine.

† One of these was the Franciscan novice, Brother Henry, who was only eighteen; at the sight of the body of his Superior dangling from the beam to which others were being attached, he was seized by panic fear and yielded to the persuasions of a Calvinist minister

It is thus that all the details of the last moments of the faithful band have come down to us. "I see the heavens opened," said one, as the cord was placed round his neck; another repeated over and over again: "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and in the dark barn, where indescribable horrors were enacted, the words were heard: "This very day we shall keep high feast in Heaven above with God, and with the Lamb."

The bodies of the martyrs were left hanging till the afternoon, many of the people of the city coming out to see the spectacle, which was the more horrible because the Gueux had mutilated the corpses in a frightful manner, cutting off their noses and ears, and slashing them with their sabres. A Catholic of Gorcum went boldly to the authorities and obtained an order for their burial, but the soldiers themselves were charged to carry it out, which they did by digging holes under the two beams on which the bodies hung, and then cutting the cords so that they fell pell-mell into the holes. The Bollandists record the story current in the district that from the graves there sprung up nineteen beautiful white flowers of a kind unknown in the country. The martyrs of Gorcum were canonized by Pius IX in 1867, and the feast of St John of Oosterwyck and his companions is kept by the Canons Regular on the anniversary of their death, July 9.*

Thus, in the course of the year 1572, six members of the Congregation of Windesheim had laid down their lives for Christ and the supremacy of His Vicar on earth, and, says Dr. Acquoy, a far greater number suffered torture and mutilation.†

In the southern provinces of the Netherlands persecution also raged, and of the Prior of Seven Fountains we read that neither fire nor sword could overcome his constancy; his Monastery was burnt and his Community dispersed; the Canons of Groenendael were obliged to leave their Monastery, as were the brethren of many a

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who assisted at the execution. The unfortunate youth was even made to shoot a bullet into the body of the Father Guardian. He was taken into the household of de la Marck, but escaped shortly after and fled to the Friars Minor at Bois-le-Duc; here he was received with a charity worthy of the sons of St Francis.

* For a full account of the martyrs see *Les Martyrs*, by Dom H. Leclercq, vol. viii, a volume of the "Saints" series entitled *Les Martyrs de Gorcum* (Lecoffre, Paris), and the Bollandists; Alban Butler gives a short notice on them on July 9.

† *Het Windesem.*, vol. ii, p. 154.

peaceful retreat. But religion finally triumphed in Belgium, and after years of struggle an era of prosperity was in store for it under Albert and Isabella. The Canons returned to rebuild their Monasteries, and it was noticed by those of the Green Valley that Ruysbroeck's tree, which during their absence had withered away, so as to appear only a dead trunk, revived and put forth fresh leaves, as if to welcome them back to their old home.

But though individual houses flourished and still produced learned and holy men, the Congregation had received blows from which it was never to recover. It had done the work God gave it to do; in an age when morality was at a low ebb even among the clergy, when the great wealth of the Monasteries had led to deplorable abuses, and scandalous disorders justified the startlingly bold language used by men who, like Vincent Ferrer, Savonarola, and Gerard Groote himself, longed to see the Church's honour vindicated—in such an age, when contempt for the clergy, both secular and regular, was spreading among the laity, the Windesheimers had given a bright example of purity of life, of willing poverty, of lowliness of spirit, and fervent observance of monastic discipline. They had been true reformers; their work had been an effort to restore all things in Christ, the Brothers of the Common Life devoting themselves to education and to the spread of true devotion among the laity, while the only exterior work of the Canons had been the reform of those of whom it might have been said with truth that the " best gold " had become dim. Between 1545 and 1563 the Council of Trent promulgated decrees by which the reformation of Monasteries, so zealously laboured for by the Congregation, was carried into effect, and God had also raised up a body of men better suited than the contemplatives of Windesheim to cope with the difficulties which the Church was to encounter from the sixteenth century onwards. The religious education of youth passed largely into the hands of the Jesuits from those of the Brothers of the Common Life, who had sent a continual stream of vocation to the houses of the Windesheim circle.

The opinion is held by some writers that the *Ratio studiorum* of the Jesuit Colleges was partly inspired by the system prevalent in those of the Brothers of the Common Life, and it has been also suggested that the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius owe something to the

"Spiritual Ascent"* of Gerard of Zutphen, Librarian of the house of Brothers of the Common Life at Deventer, and to the *Rosetum* of John Mauburnus,† a Canon of Windesheim. The question relating to the *Ratio studiorum* is fully discussed by Père Herman, S.J., in *La Pédagogie des Jésuites au XVI^e siècle*,‡ and that concerning the originality of the *Spiritual Exercises* by Père Watrigant in *La Genèse des Exercices*, but to follow them in these arguments would lead us too far from our subject.

In 1629 William van Herckenroy, Prior of the Monastery of the Passion of Christ at Tongres, laboured successfully to obtain from Ferdinand II the restitution of eleven Monasteries to the Windesheim Union, but the battle of Leipzig, won by Gustavus Adolphus in 1630, was a triumph for Lutheranism, and its effects counteracted the work of restoration.

In the eighteenth century Josephism completed what Protestantism had begun, exemplifying the words of Joel: "That which the canker-worm hath left, the caterpillar hath eaten."

Like the French Government in more recent times,

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* Translated into English by J. P. Arthur (Burns and Oates, 1908).

† The name of Mauburnus, a student of Deventer, later on professed at Mount St Agnes, where he was a disciple of Thomas à Kempis, recalls one of the reforms undertaken by the Congregation of Windesheim at the end of the fifteenth century, that of the famous Abbey of St Victor at Paris, to which they were called through the influence of Standonck (himself a former pupil of the Brothers of the Common Life), who had become Rector of the College of Montaigu at Paris, in which St Ignatius was a student. Six Canons, with Mauburnus at their head, were received by Standonck and first undertook the reform of the Abbey of St Séverin, in which they succeeded admirably in spite of great difficulties, "overcoming them," says Bonneau in his *Histoire de l'Abbaye Royale de St Victor*, "by the holiness of their lives, their austerity, their regularity, their courage in the direst poverty." But at St Victor's they made the great mistake of trying to introduce the ceremonies and customs of Windesheim instead of simply reviving those of the ancient *Liber Ordinis*, and after nine months they gave up the work and returned. The Abbey of St Victor, to which Windesheim itself owed many of its traditions, unfortunately fell into Jansenism, which, in the seventeenth century, made such havoc in the Church in France, and the Community was dispersed during the French Revolution.

‡ "Les Collèges des Frères de la Vie Commune," he says, "ont été dans les Pays-Bas et en Allemagne au XVI^e siècle, ce que furent au siècle suivant dans l'Europe Catholique les institutions des Jésuites," and he shows various points of method which the Society borrowed from the Brothers of the Common Life. The publisher of this interesting study is Dewit, Rue Royale, Brussels.

Joseph II of Austria began his campaign against the Religious Orders by suppressing in his states all those which were not devoted to active works, and during his reign not fewer than 624 Monasteries were closed.

The year 1783–84 saw the suppression of Groenendael, the Red Cloister and Seven Fountains; it was, indeed, as if " a few olives that remain be shaken out of the olive trees; or grapes when the vintage is ended."

The home of Blessed John Ruysbroeck, so dear to his spiritual descendants, was restored, when in 1789 the people of Belgium threw off the Austrian yoke, but during the French Revolution the laws of the 15th Fructidor, 1796, closed all religious houses in what were then called the " nine departments."

The last Prior of the Congregation, Constantine Belling, died in 1807 at Freuswegen, the sole remaining Monastery of the once flourishing Union. One Canon, Charles de Cooth, survived till 1811; he spent his last years gathering into a volume what remained of archives, letters of convocation to the General Chapters, etc., and wrote on the first page: " General Chapters of the Laterano-Windesheim Congregation,* of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, from the year 1619 to its suppression in 1811."

This suppression was effected by an imperial decree of Napoleon, dated November 11, by which " The Chapters and all corporations of monks and nuns, and monastic Orders existing in the department of the Lippe, to whatever Congregation they belong, whether endowed or mendicant, are and remain suppressed."

The Congregation of Windesheim had run its course. The once stately tree which seemed to have taken such firm root in the Low Countries had fallen beneath the repeated blows of the Church's enemies, yet by a strange and unexpected Providence, the very persecution which, in destroying it, had also enriched it with the blood of martyrs for the supremacy of Christ's Vicar, sent forth from England daughters and sisters of martyrs for the same cause, and the little offshoot planted by them was to survive even to our days, and three hundred years later to take root in English soil.

Thus it has come about that the Constitutions which drew their inspiration from fourteenth-century mystics, living a life very close to God in the solitude of the Green Valley, and faithfully observed in many an old-world

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* See p. 32.

Dutch and Flemish cloister, are still a living rule to souls seeking, as they sought, to live " to God alone."*

Dr. Acquoy, in his work on Windesheim, which, though Protestant, is most appreciative and is of the greatest use to those who would study the history of the Congregation, concludes by an account of its general influence on life in the Low Countries and in the Rhineland; he reviews the part played by the Canons with regard to the development of agriculture, their work in copying and illuminating manuscripts,† and later on as printers. The Canons were often the architects and decorators of their own churches, the Red Cloister being the most remarkable for artistic work, and that of St Martin's, Louvain, for the learning of its members. Dr. Acquoy also touches on the literary output of the Canons, and acknowledges what the History of the Low Countries owes to them,‡ but he concludes that in all these departments the Congregation may be said rather to have contributed a noble part to material and intellectual progress than to have exercised a moulding or controlling force. Its influence was of another order. Père Herman, S.J., in his *Pédagogie des Jésuites*, writes: " The influence of their ascetical doctrines, and the light diffused by the Congregation of Windesheim, which has given us that immortal work, the *Imitation of Christ*, quickened the religious aspirations of all Europe " (p. 100). This would seem, indeed, a bold pronouncement, were it not for the mention of the book which has animated the spiritual vitality of countless souls during five centuries.

With regard to education, it is noticeable that no word referring to it is found in the old Constitutions; the Congregation of Windesheim was essentially contemplative, though the life was in no wise of the eremitical type, for, as may be remembered, Gerard the Great would not entertain the suggestion that his disciples should adopt the Carthusian Rule, because he would not have them " so separated from the world as not to be able to help those who should come to them." The work of education, however, being in no way incompatible with the canonical life, was taken up by some Communities of Canonesses, though always as secondary to the work essential to their institute: the public recitation of the Divine Office.* The influence of the Brothers of the Common Life on education has been already referred to; the last of their houses was closed by a decree of Napoleon.

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* *Soli Deo viventes*, Const., cap. xvii, *De admissione Novitiorum.*

† An interesting specimen of their skill in illuminating is preserved in the Imperial Library, Berlin; it is a prayer book written by a Brother of the Monastery of St Mary's Fountain, near Arnhem, adorned by fine miniatures, the frontispiece being a portrait of the Duchess Mary of Gueldres, for whom the work was done in 1415.

‡ The most important historical work by a member of the Congregation is the *Magnum Chronicon Belgicum*, a history of the provinces now forming Belgium, from A.D. 54 to 1674. The author is unknown, but he belonged to the Monastery of Neuss, near Cologne.

It is to be hoped that a worthy history of the Congregation of Windesheim, which in a troubled age effected so much for the good of souls, may be one day given to the English public; but these pages may suffice to show that its members were indeed of that race of men who are capable of "working the works of God," for the only greatness they sought was that expressed in the words of Thomas à Kempis: "He is truly great who is great in charity. He is truly great who is little in his own eyes."

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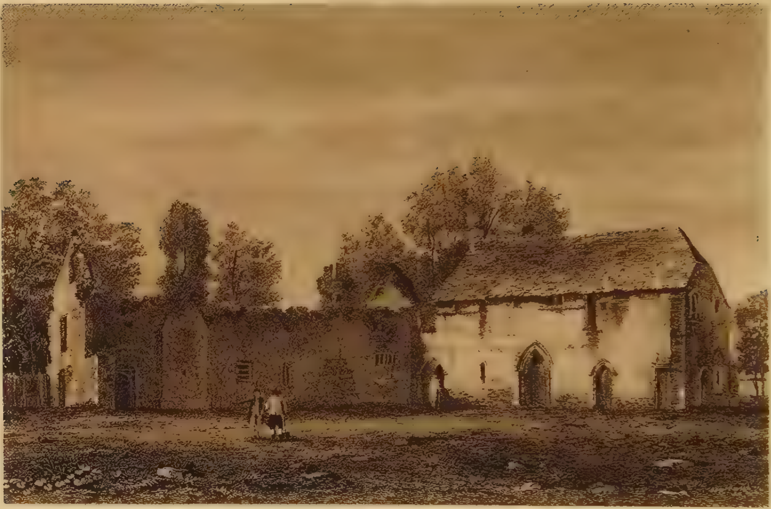
* "Seeing that the Canonical Order is essentially ordained for the solemnities of the Divine Worship, the service of the Choir is to be preferred before all other work" (Const., chap. xii: "How the Sisters ought to behave at the Canonical Hours").

PART II

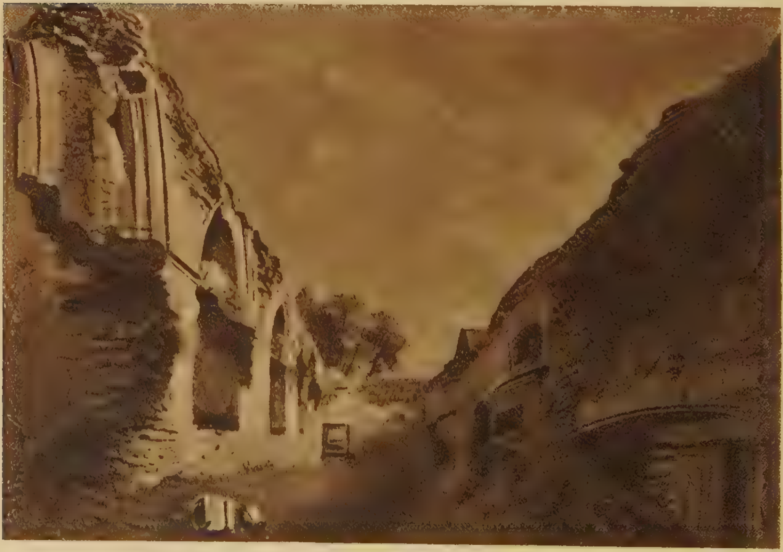
KITH AND KIN OF ENGLISH MARTYRS

Arms of Burnham Abbey



BURNHAM ABBEY [illegible]

Founded A.D 1265 by Richard King of the Romans



BURNHAM ABBEY—INTERIOR OF FRATER, 1830

To face page 169

I

A LINK WITH A PRE-REFORMATION MONASTERY IN ENGLAND

(SISTER ELIZABETH WOODFORD)

IN 1548 a nun entered St Ursula's who was to link the monastic life of Catholic England to the religious family of Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis.

Elizabeth Woodford, the first of many Englishwomen to seek refuge in the old Flemish Cloister, was the daughter of Sir Robert Woodford of Brightwell, in Buckinghamshire, and of Alice, his wife, also of Brightwell.*

In the same parish, that of Burnham, stood a Monastery already ancient in the sixteenth century, for it had been founded in 1265 by Richard, King of the Romans.† The Foundation Charter is given in Dugdale's *Monasti-*

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* See *Chronicle of St Monica's, Louvain*, edited by Dom Adam Hamilton (Sands and Co.). The Chronicle, of which the original MS. is in the possession of the Community of Canonesses Regular, established at St Augustine's Priory, Newton Abbot, Devonshire, is our chief source of information from 1548 till 1629, when the annals of the English Convent, Bruges, were begun, but, for many years after, these are supplemented by the Chronicle of St Monica's. Dom Adam gives the pedigree of the Woodford family. Their Arms were: Sable, Three Leopard's Heads Argent, from which issue Fleurs de Lys Gules.

† The following account of this Prince is abridged from that given in the *Records of Buckinghamshire* (vol. v), published by the Architectural and Archæological Society for that county: "He was the second son of King John, nephew to his famous namesake, Richard Cœur-de-Lion, and brother to King Henry III. . . . Endowed with greater ability, prudence, and firmness than the weak, impetuous King, he obtained considerable ascendancy over him, and as Earl of Cornwall and Count of Poitou, was regarded as the richest prince in Christendom. He was, in 1257, elected to the Imperial Throne of Germany, the Emperor Frederick II, the last of his line, having died six years previously. Richard, elected by the Princes of the Diet, though not by the whole body, and crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle, became Emperor Elect or expectant, and according to custom received the title of King of the Romans. Although after his acceptance of sovereignty in Germany he passed lengthy periods there, he by no means dissociated himself from the affairs of his own country. In the contentions between the King and the Barons he appears to have acted the part of mediator as long as was possible, and when at last arms were resorted to, he supported as was natural

con Anglicanum: "Richard by the grace of God, King of the Romans, ever Augustus" gives all the Faithful in Christ to know that he confirms "to God and to the Blessed Mary and to the monastery of Burnham, which we have caused to be founded, and to the nuns there serving God . . . for the health of our soul and of the souls of our predecessors, Kings of England, the manor of Burnham, with all its appurtenances . . . to be possessed in perpetuity," and he and his heirs are held "to warrant, defend and acquit this our gift to the said nuns, and to their successors against all men, Jews and Christians"; the monastery is exempted from other secular demands, "due and customary ward of the castle of Wyndelsore (Windsor), being excepted." The witnesses are "Henry, the illustrious King of England; our brother the Lord Edward, the first-born of the same King, our nephew"; the Bishop of Bath, Chancellor of England, the Bishops of Lincoln and Coventry, and Richard's two sons, Henry and Edmund; to their signatures are added those of some of the local knights and gentry. The date of the Charter is April 18, 1266, "the ninth year of our reign."

In the course of time various manors (Stoke, Bulstrode, Beaconsfield) were granted to the Abbey, and the market tolls of Burnham were also in the hands of the Abbess.

But the house never rose to great importance, and at the dissolution it was ranked among the "Lesser Monasteries," *i.e.*, those which had an income not amounting to £200 per annum.

We can gather some idea of the life led by the inmates of such a Monastery from what Cardinal Gasquet tells us in his *English Monastic Life* of another Augustinian house, that of Grace Dieu in Leicestershire, which, like Burnham Abbey, was dissolved in 1539. The account books of Grace Dieu throw light on many homely details concerning the feasts and fasts, the dress and diet, the occupations and charities of these pre-Reformation nuns. Prayer, work, and study filled up their days, as they fill up those of their successors in the twentieth

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the cause of the King. After the battle of Lewes, in which the royal cause was defeated, he had to endure nine months' imprisonment in the Tower; in the following year, 1265, peace was made through Richard's influence, and as an act of thanksgiving to Heaven he then founded Burnham Abbey. He died in 1272 and was interred at the Abbey of Hales, also founded by him."

century, but women in enclosed Orders have not generally nowadays the like power of exercising their influence as large land-owners; in this capacity medieval nuns often displayed considerable administrative talents, while showing a kindly interest in their numerous tenants, thus verifying the French saying: "Il fait bon vivre sous la crosse."

The charity of such abbeys as Grace Dieu and Burnham took many forms; the poor would flock daily to the Convent gate to claim their doles,* the sick would come for the mixtures and ointments which the Sister who filled the office of "Apothecary"† prepared from

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* The Customs of the English Convent still ordain that on the death of any nun "for three days the deceased Sister's portion of food be given to the poor, and as many loaves distributed to them as she has spent years on earth."

† The Apothecary had the charge of making up prescriptions; it is to be regretted that at the English Convent, Bruges, there is no MS. record of these earlier than the year 1702. The MS. in which they are contained is entitled "Receipts Both Galenicall and Chimicall. Preparations of Mr. Jenison who first teach us to make our Druggs in the year 1702." Among the receipts we find the following:

"*For ye biting of a mad dog:*

The leaves of Rue	6 ounces.
Garlick	4 ounces.
Mithridate	4 ounces.

"Boyle all these in old Ale, 4 pints to ye conesumption of half, in a close vessel, strain it and give 9 mornings sequenter 8 spoonfulls fasting to a man, if a woman only 6, to a dog 4 spoonfulls. This very receipt having so often cured those that have been bit, it was by order of Parliment to be put upon ye Church doors through out all England, having never failed its desired effects.

"*Dr. Ralalife's Receipt for a Consumption:*

"Crab's claws finely powdered, Crab's eyes prepared, Pearl and Loaf Sugar of Each one dram, mix all together in a fine powder and devide it in 7 papers, take one paper every morning and at 4 a clock in ye afternoon in two spoonfulls of asses milk, and take half a pint after it.

"*Lady Carrington's cerecloth : its virtue :* it cures ye king's evil or any other sore by washing your sore with milk or butter and beere, then apply this cerecloth till its cured."

There is also at the English Convent, Bruges, a copy of *The Queen's Closet opened*, printed for Peter Dring, London, and to be sold at the Sun in the Poultry, next door to the Rose Tavern, 1661. We will give one or two specimens of the receipts, which no doubt were dutifully made up by the Sister Apothecary in what is still called "The Apothecary's shop."

"*To procure sleep:* Bruise a handful of Anniseeds, and steep them in red Rose-water, and make up in little bags, and binde one of them to each nostril and it will cause sleep.

"*Eye :* Take the gall of a white cock chicken, and a drop or two of Life Honey, mingle them together in a sawcer on a few Embers, and drop it three or four times a day into the Eye."

the medicinal herbs cultivated for the purpose. Some knowledge of "physic" was given to the girls brought up in the Convent; they were taught how to treat wounds and sores, and later on, when married, they too would have their "still room" at the Manor House, where they would make up remedies and serve their poor neighbours with their own hands.

It was the general custom for the country gentry to send their daughters to be educated in nunneries, though at that period all nuns belonged to what are called the enclosed Orders, for the educational institutes, now so multiplied, did not then exist.

"The whole machinery of education," writes Dr. Jessop, "had for centuries been in the hands of Regulars. The dissolution of the monasteries meant the shutting up of all the great schools in the kingdom, leaving fathers of families to create their own supply under the pressure of the sudden demand. The country gentry saw with dismay that the old seminaries had been swept away. It was no longer possible to send a daughter to a neighbouring convent or a son to the nearest abbey," and he accounts this one of the causes of "soreness and irritation at the new order of things."*

It is most probable, therefore,† that Elizabeth Woodford was educated by the Canonesses of Burnham Abbey, where she made her Profession on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1519. There could have been no thought then of the fate which, within twenty years, was to befall the house founded by a member of the English royal family, more than two centuries before.

The young King, Henry VIII, had reigned for ten years, and his gifts of mind and person were such as to make him the pride and idol of his people. He was soon to receive from Leo X the title of "Defender of the Faith," in reward for his able work against Luther on the Seven Sacraments, and he was at this time sincerely pious, hearing every morning two or three Masses, a custom he would never omit even on days when a great hunt was organized; among those who swayed the councils of state at this period Sir Thomas More already held a prominent place, and he was soon to become Chancellor of the kingdom, and the personal friend of Henry. We cannot here trace the steps by which the brilliant young monarch became a monster of vice, and a persecutor of the Faith of which he was the official defender, while, as the Chronicle of St Monica's expresses it, " the face of the Church in England was turned to heresy." In 1527 the question of the King's divorce (or rather the declaration of the nullity of his marriage) was mooted, and by 1531 Henry had gone so far as to claim the title of Supreme Head of the Church in England, though no definition of the term was attempted, but in 1535 Fisher and More laid down their lives rather than subscribe to it.

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* *One Generation of a Norfolk House*, p. 35.

† At a Visitation in 1436 Bishop Grey had ordained that girls should leave the Monastery when they were fourteen, a much more mature age in the fifteenth century than it is nowadays. We find the regulation repeated by Bishop Atwater in 1519, and he also decreed that not even young children should ever be admitted to the dormitory of the nuns. (See article on Burnham in *History of the County of Buckingham*, Part X: Constable, London.) We learn from the account books of Grace Dieu for the years between 1414 and 1418 that the daughter of Lord Beaumont was paid for at the rate of £2 13s. 4d. per annum, while a certain Thomas Hunte paid 17s. 4d. a year for the "food" of each of his two daughters (Cardinal Gasquet's *English Monastic Life*).

The following year saw the dissolution of the Lesser Monasteries, and the Royal Commissioners visited Burnham, whose Abbess, Margaret Gibson, obtained a respite for her house and signed a deed recognizing the King's prerogative.*

The Act, deplorable as it was, did not necessarily imply what it suggests to the Catholic of to-day, who, in the light of subsequent events, realizes all that was signified by the King's demand. Few in the reign of Henry VIII understood to what such a consent committed them. A convocation of the clergy in 1531 had accepted the title *Quantum per legem Christi licet*, and it was not clearly understood to mean headship in spiritual matters, some interpreting it as referring only to authority over the temporalities of the Church. Even Blessed Thomas More confessed that he found it difficult to refute at once the arguments of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who told him "that as I condemned not the conscience of them that swear, it appeared well that I did not take it for a very sure thing and a certain, that I might not lawfully swear it: but rather as a thing uncertain and doubtful . . . whereas," he said, "you know for a certainty, and a thing without doubt, that you be bound to obey your sovereign Lord, your king." The Martyr's own daughter, Margaret, implored him "to conform his conscience to that of the men of learning and repute who had yielded."* To his clear mind and well-informed conscience it was, as he said, a matter of "Beheadal or hell," but the position of the average man or woman was very different, till under Edward VI, and especially under Elizabeth, the issues at stake became clear to all.†

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* William Cole (Cole MSS., xxxii, p. 41 or 42, both numbers are on top corner of the sheet) says:

"Margaret Gibson was elected Abbess in July 1507: and in the year 1534 she gave in the Valor aforesaid, & reseigned in 1536, unwillingly subscribing to the Supremacy in 1534, but to avoid surrendering her convent, being there grown old, she yielded to it. . . . Alice Baldwin succeeded Margt Gibson's resignation in 1536. She had the mortification of being the last Abbess of this House and seeing herself and 9 nuns turned adrift to shift for themselves; all out of Regard to satisfy the lust, cruelty and Revenge of that more than Beast, King Henry the 8th."

William Cole gives references to Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, vol. i, College of Records ad B. [*sic*] 3d, pp. 138, 139.

On the left hand page he adds: " Margt Gibson Abbess would not surrender her convent; so that Henry 8th to serve his Turn was obliged to constitute Alice Baldwin Abbess about a year before the Dissolution."

Cole's reference to Burnet seems to be an error.

The suppression of Monasteries was not unprecedented in England; both Henry V and Richard II had suppressed a considerable number, and in more recent times the dissolution of no less than twenty-nine by Cardinal Wolsey prevented the new legislation (for all was done under colour of the law) from startling men's minds, or from seeing in it a measure aimed not only against Monasteries but against religion itself. "It is well to bear in mind," says Cardinal Gasquet, "that the idea of any general attack on monasteries was not only kept in the background, but actually repudiated by both king and agents" (*Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*). But whatever may have been Margaret

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* See Father Bridgett's *Life of Sir Thomas More* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London.)

† Cardinal Bourne, in a sermon preached at West Grinstead in 1923, set forth very clearly the perplexity of "the average man" in the early days of the "Reformation" in England, and he asserts that "the Faith and practice in this country in the year 1534 was just as good as that in any other at the same period. . . . In those days national schism was unthinkable. . . . But under Elizabeth public opinion had been aroused. Whereas, under Henry VIII only one Bishop had resisted, under Elizabeth all resisted except one. . . . Elizabeth seems to have remembered the words: 'I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.' She imprisoned all the Bishops. No more Catholic ordinations were possible . . . no priests and no Mass."

Gibson's responsibility in God's sight, there can be little doubt that her last days on earth must have been inexpressibly sad. In a paper on *The Fall of the Wiltshire Monasteries*,* by the Rev. W. Gilchrist Clark, we read: "Of the internal history of the surviving monasteries during the period 1536-1539, we have little information, though an occasional glimpse is afforded us by one or other of the letters of Cromwell's voluminous correspondence. The picture they reveal to us is one of steady pressure on the one side by stringent 'injunctions' and vexatious interference in the internal affairs of the houses, brought to bear by Cromwell and his subordinates with the object of making existence under such conditions intolerable, and so bringing about the 'voluntary' surrenders by which these houses were to come into the king's hands. . . ." Under this pressure, it is not wonderful that we find houses beginning to give way: ". . . the inmates of the religious houses seem to have been convinced, like the rest of their brethren, of the futility of further resistance, and surrender became only a question of time, delayed for a longer or shorter period, according to the temper and courage of the head in each instance. . . . By March 28, 1540, there was not a religious house standing in England, so far as I can discover."

On September 19, 1539, Alice Baldwin, last Abbess of Burnham,† gave up her Abbey to the notorious Dr.

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* Reprinted from the *Wiltshire Archæological and Natural History Magazine*, vol. xxvii, June, 1896. In another paper, published by the Royal Archæological Institute of England and Ireland, he gives us much interesting information concerning the Augustinian Abbey of Lacock, which, like Burnham, obtained "licence to continue" (on payment of a fine of £300), owing to the fact that the visitors could "finde no excesse"; but, as at Burnham, the respite was but for a few years (which was to be attributed to the generosity of the King!), and the House was dissolved in 1539.

† The names of the Abbesses are as follows:

Margery of Aston, elected 1266, resigned 1274 (she had been professed at Goring).
Maud of Dorchester, elected 1274, resigned 1274.
Joan of Rideware, elected 1274, died 1314.
Idonea of Audley, elected 1316, died 1334.
Joan of Somerville, elected 1334.
Margery de Louches (or Louth), elected 1334, resigned 1339.
Joan of Dorney (or Turner), elected 1339.
Agnes Frankleyne, elected 1357, resigned 1393.
Elizabeth Warde, elected 1393.
Alice Golafe, elected 1403.
Agnes Gower, elected 1457.

London, the instrument of so many spoliations, and the Community, consisting of herself and nine other nuns, was dissolved. The Act of surrender forms a sad counterpart to the Foundation Charter, granted 274 years previously. Like it, the deed is addressed to "all the Faithful in Christ to whom the present writing may come," and by it, "Alice Baldwin, Abbess of the House or Abbey of the Blessed Mary of Burnham, in the county of Buckingham, of the Order of St Augustine, of the diocese in Lincoln . . . gives, delivers and confirms to our most illustrious and most invincible prince and Lord Henry VIII, by the grace of God King of England etc. . . all the said house or abbey," and "all rights acquired by us," are given up "to whatsoever uses are pleasing to his Majesty."

Such deeds, alas! were signed all over England by prelates, abbots, priors, and heads of Convents of women, and those were few who were clear-sighted enough or courageous enough to refuse, though in many cases the Acts proposed for signature were couched in terms which involved not only a surrender of a most sacred trust, but a veritable betrayal of the Faith.

We would fain have seen at Burnham the spirit which later on we shall find so plentifully exemplified in those who followed Elizabeth Woodford to the old Flemish house of the same Order at Louvain, but of the document by which Burnham Abbey was surrendered we can say what Cardinal Gasquet notes with regard to a like deed (by which the Cistercian House of Tarrant was surrendered), that it is worthless, as all the signatures are written in the same hand.

The names of the nuns of Burnham at the time of the dissolution and the pensions awarded them are as follows:

"Alyce Baldwin, £13. 6s. 8d.; Ann Benfeild, £4.; Alyce Celles, £2. 6s. 8d.; Margaret Browne, £3.; Elizabeth Woodforth, £2.; Elizabeth Loo, £2.; Ann Norys, Margaret Mosse, Briggitt Woodward, Luce Pachett, £2. each."

Agnes Sturdy, name occurs in 1459.
Joan Radcliffe, resigned 1507.
Margaret Gibson, elected 1507, resigned 1536.
Alice Baldwin, elected 1536, last Abbess.

The seal of the abbey represented the Coronation of Our Lady; its arms were Or on a chief Argent, three lozenges Gules (Browne Willis, *The History of Abbies*).

The report of the Visitors declares that no charge could be brought against the lives of the Sisters, and that all desired to go into other religious houses. In fact, in all Buckinghamshire only one nun was found willing to give up her religious life. This seems conclusive as to their non-comprehension of what was involved in the recognition of the King's supremacy, for women ready to give up their Faith would surely have not hesitated to be unfaithful to their vows also.

With regard to the temporalities, the Survey of 1535 runs thus: "The monastery of the Order of St Augustine. Value £511. 2s. 4d., Servants, 37, whereof priests two, Hinds 21, Women 27, Bells and lead worth £401. 16s. 8d. The House in good estate. The value of the moveable goods £451. 17s. 9d. Stocks and Debts, none. Woods, 160 acres; whereof in woods under twenty years age 80 Acres; old Woods 80 Acres."

So the value of the little Buckinghamshire Abbey went to swell the royal spoils; and its inhabitants, some, no doubt old and infirm, were turned out to seek a living as they might.

In the case of Elizabeth there will have been no difficulty; she would go to her brother, Sir Thomas Woodford, who resided at Brightwell Hall.* Her stay there, however, seems to have been short; she may have felt that it would not be easy to maintain the spirit of her vocation in her childhood's home, amidst members of her own family, and she went to live with Dr. Clement at Marshfoot in Essex, where she will have helped in the education of his eleven children. Dr. Clement had married Margaret Giggs, the adopted daughter of Sir Thomas More, and possibly the nun from Burnham may have first heard from her that there existed in the Low Countries a Congregation of Augustinian Canons, to which Erasmus, the great friend of the More family, had once belonged, which had numerous houses of Canonesses.

To the Low Countries Elizabeth followed the Clements when "they undertook voluntary banishment out of the Kingdom of England, under the reign of King Edward VI, for the sake of the Catholic Faith." With them she lived first at Bruges, little dreaming that an English Community would one day be there founded which would keep her memory as that of a link with pre-Reformation monastic life in their native land. The Clements soon removed to Louvain, and Elizabeth, whose fidelity to her vocation had never faltered, finding there a Monastery of her own Order, entered it in 1548. The fact is thus recorded in the Chronicle of St Monica's:

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* By a strange coincidence, both the house in which Elizabeth was born and the abbey in which she was professed have become the homes of Anglican Sisters. The abbey has been partially rebuilt and its inmates form an enclosed community called "The Society of the Precious Blood"; they established themselves there in 1918, and have adopted the Rule of St Augustine, though they do not call themselves Augustinians; and another community has taken up its abode in a house built on the site of Brightwell Hall, the old home of the Woodfords, now known as "The House of Prayer."

"In the year of our Lord 1548, under the reign of King Edward the Sixth of that name, religious houses being put down, and religious persons, both men and women, thrust out to lead their lives in great danger of the world, and the face of the Church of England turned to heresy, Elizabeth Woodford, leaving her native soil, who before had left the world by religious Profession, came into Brabant, and offering herself to the Monastery of St Ursula's in Louvain, of the same Order of St Augustine that she was of, there to end her life in religious observance as she had vowed, was graciously received."

We know little of her life in the Flemish Monastery beyond what we learn from the short biography of her former pupil, Margaret Clement, who was to become her Prioress. We are told, however, that she was highly esteemed by the other religious, and Margaret Clement, who, as we shall see, was treated by her in her youth with much severity, "loved her with great reverence, and took all her words as coming from God." Later on, when Margaret was elected Prioress, the Chronicle says that she "was a diligent observer of the Order, and well instructed and exercised in the perfection of virtue; the old nun, Sister Elizabeth Woodford, having disposed her thereunto."

Life at St Ursula's must have required much generosity on the part of the English nun. She was the only one of her nation when she entered, and probably knew but a few words of Flemish, and the Canonesses of St Ursula's are not likely to have understood English. Moreover, being now about fifty years of age, Elizabeth must have found it difficult to adopt what was probably a far harder manner of life than she had led in the Monastery of her Profession, the house where she had been brought up, and where the nuns would have known one another from childhood, being chiefly recruited from among the families of the neighbouring gentry. The small house in the "Mi-rue" with its town garden must have contrasted with the old Monastery of Burnham, surrounded by its extensive woods. The midnight rising will have been familiar to her, but not the Windesheim Breviary, in use at St Ursula's, for she had been accustomed to the Sarum Use, adopted at Burnham in 1519.*

The Convent was very poor,† and the annals make mention of "the hard fare and simple diet of the cloister, dressed after the Dutch manner, in order that we might know with what fervour our elders began to serve God in holy religion." They had only coarse rye bread, and their ordinary fare was a mess of porridge, made of herbs, sodden together with water, and to this at dinner was added "a little piece of black beef about the greatness of two fingers." The poverty of the fare must have been the harder because breakfast was unknown at St Ursula's; the Sisters had not even the "mixtum," or small measure of bread and wine generally allowed in medieval Monasteries. "In Lent they had only a mess of porridge of the Dutch fashion, with half a herring or suchlike thing each one, and some little portion of peas dressed with lamp oil; one day in the week the Lord Mayor's wife gave them a dinner of a portion of salt fish, about the bigness of three fingers, with a little spoonful of salad oil, which was accounted great cheer. For their collation at night nothing else but a piece of the foresaid black rye bread, and small beer."

The labours of the nuns are also described as "hard for gentlewomen to undergo." They washed the woollen clothes, helped to mould the great loaves of rye bread, weeded the ways of the paved courts within the cloister, and some of them wove linen in looms, "which was indeed man's work and very hard for tender weak women."

The silence was very prolonged and strict. It may be remembered that the compilers of the Constitutions in 1387 had taken some points from the Carthusian Rule; and we may think that these had inspired them especially in regulating the observance of silence. In Lent and Advent the nuns had no recreation at all. At other times they might " speak kindly together at their work in the work-chamber," on two afternoons in the week, and that was all.*

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* By leave of Bishop Atwater of Lincoln. The Sarum (or Salisbury) Use was general in the South of England in pre-Reformation times, while other Rites, such as those of York, Lincoln, Bangor, and Hereford, prevailed in the North and in Wales. "The Sarum Breviary, like the Sarum Missal, is essentially Roman." (See *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. "Sarum.")

† The account book of St Ursula's shows that Elizabeth Woodford brought a small dowry with her, which yielded an annual revenue of thirty-three florins, still enjoyed by the Community till well on in the seventeenth century (Archiepiscopal archives of Mechlin). (See also Van Even, *Louvain dans le présent et le passé*.)

But neither the poverty of the Convent, nor the austerity of the life, nor the difference of nationality deterred Englishwomen, debarred from religious life in their own land, from seeking admittance to the Flemish Cloister, and we find their names in the obit book of St Ursula's from 1548 onwards.

They seem to have held the " ould noon who came out of Inguland, in king hary's dayes " in high esteem, and she would probably give them details of her life as a religious in their own country. It is likely, therefore, that some of the terms and customs still current in the Communities, which owe their origin to St Ursula's, have thus been handed down from pre-Reformation times in England.†

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* Some idea may be formed of the strictness with which this silence was meant to be observed from the words still in the Constitutions: " The rule of silence would not bind if any part of the enclosure should take fire." The nuns now have a recreation in the evening, except on the eves of feasts, and they " may talk kindly to one another " as they sit at work for an hour in the afternoon, as their Sisters did three hundred years ago, not only twice a week but every day with few exceptions.

† Thus, though the " obedientiaries " at Windesheim were those of all medieval monasteries, the Cantors, sacristan, procurator, cellarer, refectorian, infirmarian, etc., there still exists an office which has never been inserted in the Constitutions, and of which the duties are traditional. It must have been known in pre-Reformation English abbeys, for we find it mentioned by Chaucer in his description of the Prioresse:

" Another Nonne also with hire hadde she,
" That was hire chappeleine, and Preestes thre."

The line has often puzzled commentators, and we meet with such remarks as " But Prioresses had not female chaplains " (Meiklejohn's *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*). " The chaplain in the small nunneries was often a woman " (!) (Wyatt, *Chaucer*, University Tutorial Series), while Tyrwhitt (*Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*) declares the line to be " absurd and contradictory." " No nonne," he says, " could be a chaplain. . . . The chief duty of a chaplain was to say Mass and to hear Confessions, neither of which offices could regularly be performed by a Nonne, or by any woman," and he proceeds to make cheap jokes on the subject. " His Holiness " would have " thundered loudly " against such presumption, etc., and an hypo-

A reminiscence of Sister Elizabeth's years at Burnham is found in her obituary notice:

"In the year 1573, upon the 25th day of October, died the old nun, Elizabeth Woodford. She was a substantial woman, and a strict observer of religion, although somewhat severe, as they used in old times to be towards youth in England. She had been professed fifty-three years, twenty-four whereof she lived in St Ursula's Monastery, and the other years in England, she being professed there upon the day of our Blessed Lady's Conception, in the year 1519. She was of so good a judgement, that the Prioress of St Ursula's would often ask her counsel and follow her advice in matters of moment. She would sometimes advise the young nun, Sister Margaret Clement, that if ever she came to England, they would not admit of Abbesses in their Order, for the great abuses she had seen enter into religion thereby, and would probably be again introduced; but Prioresses were, in England, of far better observance of the Order."

The idea of an English foundation at Louvain had not yet been mooted in 1572, but the thought of the possible return of the English members to their native land would have been natural at this period.

Though the persecution under Elizabeth was then raging, it must have seemed incredible to the refugees that England should indeed be lost to the Faith; they must have remembered the joyful return to the unity of the Church in Queen Mary's days, and must have hoped and prayed for the passing of the storm.

In a letter written to the Community of the English Convent by a Bishop of Bruges, so late as 1716, he says: "Our first attention we have given to your Community, finding it composed of illustrious persons exiled for the

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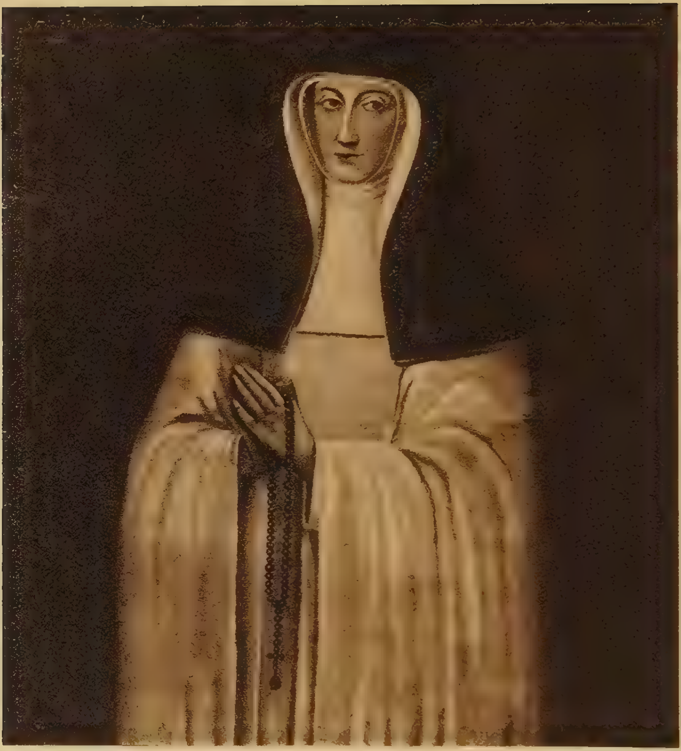
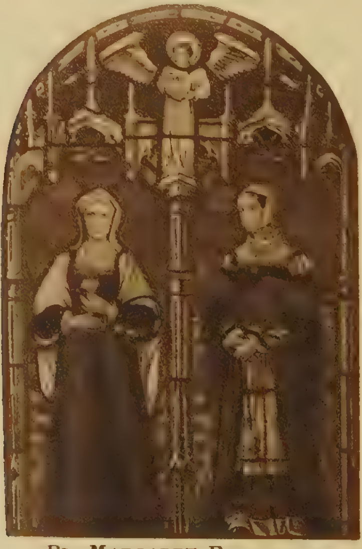
thesis about an interpolation and an insinuation about a "too gay" passage are indulged in. Lina Eckstein, in *Woman under Monasticism*, though she shows herself better informed and refers to visitations of monasteries in which the office of Chaplain is mentioned, is somewhat puzzled by the term and suggests that "she probably recited the inferior services in the chapel of the nunnery." The office of the Chaplain, as it has come down to the communities sprung from St Ursula's, has nothing to do with the "services in the chapel" beyond the fact that the nun appointed to it prepares the Plain Chant Books for the Prioress, marking what is to be sung; she also has charge of the altars in the interior of the monastery and renders various services to the Prioress, such as helping her to serve in the Refectory and at the Washing of the Feet on Maundy Thursday.

Faith of Jesus Christ, who have forsaken the advantages that a distinguished birth gave them to enjoy the liberty of the children of God in the sanctuary this Catholic country has granted them, there to render to the divine Majesty the public services to which their holy state engages them, till the Divine Providence grants you the liberty of being settled in your native country, and of there labouring to render it, what it was once so justly called, a land of saints."

But though Margaret Clement, over whose childhood and early years in religion Elizabeth Woodford had watched with so much care, was to be among the foundresses of the first English Community, the return to England was only to take place during the French Revolution, when the country which had once driven out priests and religious was to receive so many with a generous hospitality which has surely brought a blessing on the land.



Mother Margaret Clement



Bl. Margaret Pole and
Ven. Margaret Clitheroe

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II

" LIFE OF YE OLDE MOTHER MARGARET CLEMENT "

It is to Sister Elizabeth Shirley* (professed at St Ursula's in 1596) that we owe the life of her much-loved and revered Prioress Margaret Clement. " Before I begin," she says, " I must crave pardon of you, my most Deere and holy Mother, in being so bould to sett donne yt wch nether my hart can comprehend or my tonge or pen is able to express," but " The holy lyfe and actes of our ould Mother Margrit Clement being a firebrand to inkendell me in ye love of God, who bestowed on her such great graces . . . to God his honour I desire to sett donne something in writhing, yt it might be to me and my srs some help and furtherance." We will, however, spare the reader more of the good Sister's spelling, which is not of the best, even for the period at which she writes, though the *Life* is full of interest and delightful in its simplicity and shrewdness.

Margaret Clement was born in 1540, of John Clement, " a doctor of phisick," and his wife, Margaret Giggs, " a gentleman's daughter of Norfolk." He was for some time professor of Greek at Oxford, and gained a great reputation there as a linguist, but he afterwards gave himself up especially to the study of medicine, and was one of the physicians whom Henry VIII sent to attend Cardinal Wolsey during his illness in 1529.† " He was," says Cresacre More, " an excellent Grecian physician and Reader of the Physic lecture in Oxford, and set out many books of learning."

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* Elizabeth Shirley was daughter to Sir John Shirley, of Shirley in Leicestershire. We refer the reader to Dom Hamilton's edition of the Chronicle for an account of her conversion and " the pretty way Divine Wisdom took to allure this wandering soul to His service." Her manuscript life of Mother Clement is the possession of the English Convent, Bruges. It was largely used by Father Morris, S.J., in his *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers* and also by Dom Adam Hamilton. In both their works the life is supplemented by the Chronicle, belonging to the Augustinian Canonesses, established at Newton Abbot (Devonshire), who came over from Louvain in 1794. Both the *Life* and the Chronicle will be used in the following sketch.

† See Dom Adam Hamilton's work and Gillow's *Dictionary of English Catholics*.

Sir Thomas More held him in high esteem and secured his services as tutor to his children, and it was thus that he met Margaret Giggs, whom Sir Thomas had adopted as his daughter, numbering her amongst " his best beloved wenches, dear to him as if she were his own." She is seen in Holbein's picture of the Chancellor's family, standing next to his old father.

Sister Shirley records that she owed the privilege of this adoption to the fact that the future Martyr saw in her " a singular inclination to virtue and learning, and that she was of a rare spirit, wherefore he thought it good to bring her up with his own daughter, Mistress Margaret Roper, most dearly beloved of him, and so taught them himself both Greek and Latin."

Her marriage to Dr. Clement took place in 1526, and she bore him eleven children, whom they brought up after the manner they had known in that most happy " domestige schoole," presided over by More himself, whose aim was " to make his children schollars, and with their schollarship to have them joyne virtue," a school " famous over the whole world," in which the youthful learners " having been brought up from infancie with such care and industrie, their wills were rare and their diligence extraordinarie."*

But the serenity of the " domestige schoole " in the Clement family was very early overcast by sorrow. The imprisonment and martyrdom of Sir Thomas More filled them with consternation, for he had been to them all, and especially to Margaret Clement, as a dearly loved father. " He did so trust this our good grandmother (for so I may well call her, she being ye Mother of our Blessed Mother Margaret Clement), that she allwayes provided him of all his devotions and secret pennences of dissiplynes and heerecloths wch he did weere continually in the Tower of London untill ye day before he was to goe to his marterdom, and then he sent it her agayne enclosed in a caskett, because none but she should be privy to his devotions." Thus writes Sister Shirley; Cresacre More tells us that the Martyr's shirt " all imbued with his blood," was also kept very carefully by Dr. Clement's wife; but the hair shirt alone has been preserved, and is the property of the Community of St Augustine's, Newton Abbot. Another precious relic, a vertebra of the martyr's neck, is kept at the English Convent, Bruges.

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* Cresacre More, *Life and Death of Sir Thomas More.*

The *Life* tells us of Mrs. Clement's "singular devotion" to the Carthusian Order, a devotion she will have learnt from Sir Thomas More, who, in his youth, had thought of joining it. Moved with compassion for the Charterhouse monks "who were in Newgate prison, and cruelly handled," she dealt with the gaoler that she might have access to them. For this purpose, she disguised herself as a milkmaid "with a great pail upon her head, full of meat wherewith she fed the blessed company,* putting meat into their mouths, they being tied and not able to stir"; and the Chronicle adds the detail that "she cleansed them in their filthy dungeon, by bringing clean linen to comfort them." She continued this work of truly heroic charity (for the young wife and mother was thus daily risking her own life), till the King, inquiring if the Carthusians were not yet dead, and being told that they still lived, "commanded a straiter watch to be set over them, so that the keeper durst not let in this good woman any more, fearing it might cost him his head if it should be discovered. Nevertheless, what with her importunity, and by force of money, she obtained of him that he let her go up to the tiles, right over the close prison where the Blessed Fathers were. O rare example of courage of a woman! And so she, uncovering the ceiling or tiles over their heads, by a string let them down meat in a basket; approaching the same as well as she could unto their mouths as they did stand chained against the posts. But they not being able to feed themselves out of the basket, or very little, and the gaoler, fearing very much that it should be perceived, in the end refused to let her come any more; and so, soon after, they languished and pined away, one after another, what with the stink and want of food and other miseries, which they there endured."†

This was in 1537, but it was only ten years later that "the times growing daily worse and worse in England, this good married couple thought it best with Lot to depart from Sodom, and so betook themselves into voluntary exile, leaving their country, livings, rents, and seeking like Abraham to serve God only, went over to the Low Countries with all their household and children."*

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* Their names were Richard Bere, Thomas Johnson, and Thomas Green, priests; William Greenwood, Thomas Scryven, Robert Salt, Walter Pierson, Thomas Redyng, and William Horne, lay-brothers, who all gave their lives rather than deny the supremacy of Christ's Vicar. They were beatified by Pope Leo XIII on December 9, 1886.

† By September 20 of that year all had succumbed except Blessed William Horne, who was martyred at Tyburn in 1540.

They lived for a short time at Bruges, but the following year Elizabeth Woodford, who had accompanied them, having entered the Cloister of St Ursula's, Louvain, they brought thither their two youngest daughters, Helen and Margaret, that they " might learn there the form of good life and religious conversation. " Nor were there wanting," says the Chronicle, " forcible reasons to move these good parents thereunto, for great was the fame of this monastery for the education of children."

The Clements finally settled at Mechlin, and their house became " a harbour for priests, who resorted thither for relief and also for comfort in their banishment for religion; which they passed with great joy, constancy, and cheerfulness for God's cause, animating others to do the like."

On the accession of Queen Mary, in 1535, Dr. Clement returned to England, where he was elected Censor of the Royal College of Physicians, but he again took the road of exile when Elizabeth came to the throne, and died in 1572, a few months before his old friend Elizabeth Woodford. He had lost his wife two years previously, on July 6, the anniversary of the Martyr of whom she had proved herself so worthy to be the adopted daughter. Those other martyrs, for whom she had bravely risked her own life, did not fail her at the hour of her death. But we must give the account of their appearance to her in the words which, no doubt, Sister Shirley heard from the lips of Mrs. Clement's own daughter.

" The time now being come that God had appointed to reward His handmaid for her aforesaid good works done unto the Fathers of the Charterhouse, He visited her with an ague which held her nine days, and, having brought her very low and in danger, she received all the

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* They were the first family to seek refuge in Catholic Belgium. "Dr. Clement's intimate connection with Sir Thomas More," says Gillow, in his *Dictionary of English Catholics*, " probably rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the Court, as he was, with some others, exempted from a general pardon granted by Edward in 1552." Among those with whom Dr. John Clement had the honour of sharing in this exemption were Cardinal Pole and Blessed John Storey.

Sacraments with great devotion, and being desirous to give her last blessing to all her children, who were all present excepting her religious daughters and one more that remained at Bruges with her husband, she caused her to be sent for, but not being able to come so speedily, Wednesday being now come . . . calling her husband she told him that the time of her departing was now come, and she might stay no longer, for that there were standing about her bed the Reverend Monks of the Charterhouse, whom she had relieved in prison in England, and did call upon her to come away with them, and that therefore she could stay no longer, because they did expect her, which seemed a strange talk unto him. Doubting she might speak idly by reason of her sickness, he called unto her the ghostly Father, a reverend Father of the Franciscans then living in Mechlin, to examine and talk with her, to whom she constantly made answer, that she was in no way beside herself, but declared that she had still the sight of the Charterhouse Monks before her, standing about her bedside, and inviting her to come away with them as she had told her husband.

"The next day being Thursday, in the morning she called for her son Thomas, and willed him that he should take care that all her apparel should be made ready, for by God's grace she would not fail that day to go to Corpus Christi anthem; which he, taking to be spoken of distraction, and comforting her the best he could to put this out of her head, she replied that by God's grace she would not fail of her purpose, and therefore all things should be in readiness. And so it fell out that she, from that moment, drawing more and more to her end, as soon as the bell of St Rumold's began to toll to the anthem of Corpus Christi, she gave up her happy soul into the hands of God, thereby showing to have foretold the hour of her death, and she departed with that blessed company to Heaven, who had so long expected her to be partaker of their glory, as no doubt but she is. Her body was buried in the Cathedral Church of St Rumold, behind the high altar, before the memory of our Blessed Saviour lying in His grave, where also her husband was laid by her within two years after."

"Thus much," says Sister Shirley, "I thought good to note concerning the parents of our Reverend Mother, who was the youngest of their eleven children, and the least esteemed of them all, not being so given to the world as the rest of them, and therefore accounted as simple, but, as the Truth saith, the wisdom of men is counted foolishness before God, for she was always exceedingly given to true simplicity of heart, which God of His mercy grant us all. Amen." After this prelude she begins her narrative of Mother Clement's life by a chapter on what she calls "her simpelness of heart," which was the cause that in her youth she was often called "God Almighty's fool." "But oh happy name! she was here accounted His fool, but now she is accounted among His children." The expression "fool" is, of course, an allusion to the custom then in vogue of keeping a jester in great families; the Clements will have remembered affectionately Sir Thomas More's faithful fool, Pattenson.

Margaret, indeed, had been kept from all contact with the world, for she had been placed in the cloister when a mere child, and in her own home she had received such lessons of virtue that she declared afterwards that the thought of her parents' goodness was enough to move her to resist such temptations, as she felt in her childhood, and she would say to herself: "It would be a great shame for me to yield to these naughty things, having such virtuous parents. In no case may I doe this, it becometh me not." Of her schooldays at St Ursula's we read that "she did walk so sweetly among the religious that they loved her exceedingly." Yet the little scholar had her trials, for Sister Elizabeth Woodford, "being the chiefest cause that her parents placed her in this monastery, though she was not her mistress, yet she did exercise her after the sharp manner which had been in England in the bringing up of youth . . . a manner I can in nothing commend," adds Sister Shirley, with evident sore remembrance. The passage recalls Lady Jane Grey's complaints of "the pinches, nips and bobs" she received from her "sharp and severe parents," who required her to do all "in such weight, measure and number even as perfectly as God made the world."* Lady Jane thought herself "in hell" when subjected to such treatment, and Sister Shirley acknowledges that later on, hearing of the hard way in which Margaret had been "exercised," she would say, "Good Mother, how could you abide that nun?" But there was no room for resentment or bitterness in Margaret's heart, and "she loved the old English nun," and would say that the "hardness of her nature did require this treatment, and that she found by experience tribulation helped towards the spiritual progress of a soul, and gave her matter of meditation to lift up her mind to God."

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* Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*.

One of her "childish temptations" is thus recounted in her life: "Some of her companions were given to be sullen when they were chidden or corrected by their Mothers, and they would not eat their meat till they were flattered again; so she thought to do the same, yet when dinner time came she had wholly forgot, and eat a very hearty meal; and when she had eaten sufficiently, she began to think of her former purpose of forbearing her meat, but then it was too late; but smiling, thinking verily it was her good Angel that had preserved her from falling into such a childish temptation, she determined with herself no more to yield to such an evil motion."

She could not bear to hear her companions "grudge or murmur" at their mistresses, and when she was chidden for any fault, she would go to the Choir and there pray very devoutly before "a picture of our Saviour, called the Veronica, acknowledging there her fault and frailty without finding out any excuse, as commonly we are wont to do."

Margaret was but thirteen when her parents returned to England in 1557, but she had already resolved to give herself entirely to the service of God in St Ursula's cloister. "She had so great contentment and love to the place that though her friends would gladly have had her away in Queen Mary's days to be professed in England, she refused it," and on this occasion, in spite of her "simpelness," she resorted in her letter to her parents to a very feminine little stratagem, telling them that "if they would not permit her to remain there, they must find her a husband." She seems to have thought this ultimatum would "give them pause." It reads oddly enough when we remember that the writer was at an age when nowadays the question would be not of a religious Order or a husband, but of leaving her at school or continuing her education at home. Her father showed her letter to Bishop Bonner,* who, "upon the reading thereof, persuaded him by no means to take her out, for he knew not what God had foreseen therein, whereupon he ceased to molest any more, although they had provided a place for her at St Bridget's,* and also made her a cell. I cannot omit to tell here the Providence of God towards her, for not long after, the same monastery of St Bridget's where she should have been placed, was wholly dispersed and dissolved, so that the religious were fain to seek for themselves, by reason of the death of Queen Mary."

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* Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, after showing a deplorable complaisance in the matter of Henry VIII's divorce, had been imprisoned under Edward VI, restored to the government of his diocese by Mary, and under Elizabeth was again thrown into the Marshalsea prison for refusing the oath of supremacy. He died there in 1569.

Helen Clement did not share Margaret's "great contentment," and "could not give herself to any mortified life in religion, wherefore she was daily at her Sister to go with her out of the monastery, for she thought it impossible they could go forwards in that hard life, having been so tenderly brought up in their father's house, but God Almighty so strengthened His handmaid that no small temptation could draw her from her first purpose . . . although she loved her Sister, whereupon she herself made suit to her parents to take her away." The austerity of the life and the great poverty of the house would have been, not a temptation, but rather an attraction to such a soul as that of Margaret Clement, but she had a far harder trial to undergo than was involved in her resistance to the solicitations of her parents and sister.

The Convent of St Ursula's, though it never ceased to maintain a high reputation, was in a period of decline of fervour, such as only too easily occurs when a Community is for some time under weak and incapable government.

We have a striking instance of this in the history of a Convent founded just at this period, a Convent which had the privilege of having no less a Saint than St Teresa for its foundress. The very name of St Joseph's of Avila brings before us those years of ideal fervour, when it was in her own words the "Rinconcito di Dios . . ."

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* The Monastery of Sion, which was founded by Henry V in 1415 (the same year which saw the foundation of St Ursula's), was suppressed by Henry VIII, the nuns seeking refuge in Flanders; they were recalled to England by Queen Mary, but on the accession of Elizabeth they once more returned to Flanders, whence, in 1594, they embarked for Lisbon. Their final return to their own country took place in 1810, and they are now settled at Chudleigh, in Devonshire. They are the only pre-Reformation English Community which has never been dispersed, so that Sister Shirley's expressions are not accurate.

the Retreat or Paradise of delights, in which the Master could take His pleasure; yet not many years later, after a short time of government by a young and inexperienced Prioress, the Saint's presence became necessary to remedy the relaxation which had crept in; she found the nuns, who had joyfully partaken of meals of fried vine-leaves and acorns, now asking to be allowed meat, and she declares she could not have believed it possible for the spirit of a Community to change so much in so short a time. The eclipse of fervour was but a passing cloud, and the Saint's influence soon restored fervour and peace.

At St Ursula's austerity of life seems never to have failed, but the deep interior spirit of early days had waned and Margaret Clement was conscious of it. "She perceived something contrary to her spirit, though what it was in particular she could not tell," for she saw "good outward observance in order and manners." But it was the "inward matter" she sought for and found not, according to her desire, so that she was much troubled, and hesitated whether she would stay there or no, "until such time as God wrought in her heart that it was His Will she should be there professed for the good of the Convent and of those that were to come after."

She was indeed destined by God to bring back the fervour of "the golden age," of which some idea has been given in the account of the early days of Diepenveen, under the saintly Mother Salome. Margaret, as Prioress, was to foster so true an interior spirit in the Community that "it plainly appeared that God was there."

She made her vows on October 2, 1557, being then seventeen years of age. "Upon her Profession," we read, "she called instantly upon Almighty God and besought Him to give her the inward virtue which belongs to a good religious"; though her longing was for "that touch of God which calls the soul to life in the spirit . . . drawing it towards interior unity" (Ruysbroeck), she was as yet without the direction she needed, and she knew not what that was which she so earnestly desired.

So for three years she followed "the common way," though with great fervour and holding her heart ever ready to yield to the Divine Guest the innermost sanctuary of her spirit, a disposition, says Ruysbroeck, which "Love hears, and knowing the sufferings of this state, sends pity and clemency."

"It happened that there came to preach in their church, a Carmelite Friar, a very spiritual man, Father Lupus by name,* who began in his sermon to discourse of the perfection of a religious life, much bewailing the great slackness which he perceived to be nowadays amongst religious. His words, as I have heard our Reverend Mother say, were so pithy that they would have pierced a stony heart; so much that there was not any in the Choir that could forbear weeping; but when his sermon was almost at an end he broke out into these words with great zeal and fervour: 'Oh, would to God that He would afford me so much comfort as to see that my words might fall in any one of your hearts that are here present, how should I think my labours well bestowed,' which words, as she told me, she took as only spoken to herself, which she did well show afterwards by practising them. She durst not at that time desire to speak with him, but after awhile he came again to preach, at which time she got leave to speak with him alone, and he, from that time forwards, directed her in all virtue."

Like all souls who have begun to enter into the deep things of God, and to experience that he indeed lives and moves in the spirit, Margaret now gave herself especially to silence, for she "reverenced it as the key of all devotion," and so strict was she in its practice that "from one end of the week to the other, she could easily have numbered all her words, for she exercised a continual soberness in speaking, she was slow in giving her opinion, and when she saw a rash person or one full of words, she would let them have all the words. . . . She would never utter a thing that might tend to her own praise, and contrarywise she did much mislike to hear any one speak anything in their own dispraise, as to say they had no devotion, or they could not pray or such like words with some outward show of humility. But let another prove them and tell them so much as they do say of themselves, and then you shall see how far they are from that humility they would fain make show of; she told me she had never practised to humble herself in this manner, only such difficulties as she found in herself she uttered them to God and her ghostly Father. Speaking out of bitterness of heart when she was in grief, or of the imperfections of others, or of those who were not well affected towards her, all such speeches were far from her; she was slow in speaking of spiritual things, nor would she contend in her words with those that were not of her spirit or of her opinion and would say that they that stand upon their own opinion study but in one book. I dare not be long on this point," concludes Sister Shirley, "for I account it impossible to set down her rareness in this virtue of discretion in speaking."

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* In the *Historia Sacra et Profana Archiepiscopatus Mechliniensis*, p. 281 (Cornelius van Gestel), we find a short notice on Father Lupus (*vulgo* Wolfs). From it we learn that "Petrus Lupus Ord. Carmelit. Conventus Mechliniensis professus ac Prior, et per Germaniam Inferiorem Provincialis," when Mechlin was invaded by the rebels and heretics, showing himself the foremost of the inhabitants of the town in his zeal for God and King, was killed in that place where the old palace now stands," in the year 1580.

But she tells us also how, "as Sister Margaret sat at work in silence, as was her wont and the Rule commanded, while some did break their silence, one said unto her: 'Sister Margaret doth chapter us,' meaning that her example did correct them." We can imagine that this was said with a smile, but the young nun had soon to bear a certain amount of animosity. The words were pronounced which so easily give alarm even to the fervent in a religious community, "She would bring in new manners," and motives of self-love were suggested in her case, as in that of so many who have sought to rise above the level of mediocrity.

The very two whom she herself recognized as having more of the interior spirit than the others—to wit, the Prioress and Sister Elizabeth Woodford—reprehended her severely, the latter going so far as to say: "Sister Margaret, you seem to be so holy that shortly we shall take your picture and set it on the altar for a saint, for it seemeth you would be so accounted." This grieved Margaret sorely, accustomed as she must have been to the hard training which the old nun thought fit to give her dearly loved pupil of former days, but on this, as on other occasions, she bore all with exceeding great humility and patience, and sincerely thought it was no wrong that she should be thus reproached. "Oh, singular preparation to perfection," exclaims her biographer, "grounded upon humility and little esteem of herself!" Margaret had entered the valley of humility, and of such a one Ruysbroeck says: "Heaven is open to him, God is ready to hear his prayers and he is full of grace. He is grounded on Christ, the firm Rock; he who founds the edifice of virtue on humility need not fear illusion" (*Adornment of Spiritual Marriage*).

It was not long before Margaret's virtues and capacity were recognized by her sisters, for at the age of thirty, being but twelve years professed, she was elected Prioress. This, however, was for some time a cause of trial and humiliation, for as she had but one vote more than another nun, those who had not chosen her made great objections on the score that she had not attained the age of forty, required for a canonical election by a recently promulgated decree of the Council of Trent. An appeal was made to Rome by the elder part of the Community, "alleging many reasons why she was not fit to govern them," and her position was all the more painful because she was at that time the only English member except Elizabeth Woodford.

Commissioners were sent to examine the case, and the young Prioress did all she could "to be set free from the burden, which was, God knoweth, so heavy to her that she had rather chosen death than continue therein." All the nuns were given a hearing by the Visitors, and those who opposed the election, put forward, besides the objection raised as to her age, the fact that she was not of their nation and the staple accusation in such cases, that she was a setter-up of novelties.

But the Visitors, perceiving that the opposition was motived on nothing but her zeal in seeking to reform what had been "slacked from want of good government, highly commended her proceedings, and gave her more full authority than before." So Margaret was fain to submit to the yoke laid upon her shoulders, though, says her biographer, "I cannot express with what sorrow and grief she received the charge of government."

How admirably Mother Clement succeeded, the subsequent history of her community testifies. During the troubles caused in the Low Countries by the insurrection of the Gueux, a nun of one of the most strict and fervent Orders in the Church was received for a time into St Ursula's cloister, "her superiors readily granting the leave, knowing the fame of our Reverend Mother," and this religious declared that though the Rule of her own Order was, "in outward things," more strict, yet nothing could go beyond what she saw at St Ursula's of the "true discipline of mortified religion."

Nor was the nationality of the new Prioress ever a cause of difficulty, for during the thirty years of her government, "she was," says Sister Shirley, "as carefull to keep love and amety among us as the appell of her eie, and so many sorts of nations, as Duch [*i.e.*, Flemish], frinch, Inglish, spanyard, garmons, all in one house, lived in great unity and concord."*

The most serious abuse, which she set about correcting at once, was the laxity of enclosure. The special vow taken by the Religious was the means of preventing them from going out of the Cloister, a practice of which we hear so much in the account of St Teresa's early years at the Convent of the Incarnation; but there was, as we have seen, a school attached to St Ursula's, and this may have been the pretext for the introduction of a very real abuse. The friends of the Convent were invited to witness little representations, probably of the nature of mystery plays, so long popular in Catholic Belgium. It may be remembered how Gerlac Petersen, as a boy, consecrated himself to God by a vow of Chastity, while acting the part of the Blessed Virgin carrying her Son to the Temple.

But though these representations may have been considered useful for the education of the children brought up in the Convent,† they became an occasion of bringing the world into the Cloister. We even hear of the entertainment of friends within the monastery. Mother Clement acted with firmness and prudence, and Sister Shirley tells us that, though it needed " an extraordinary courage," the reform was so complete that "in her time there was not any like unto us in strictness of enclosure, so great was her care therein." One would like to know if, while Mother Clement was thus reforming abuses in the old Flemish Cloister, she ever heard through the Carmelite "fryer," or from any of the "spanyards" under her government, of the great work of reform that was being accomplished in Spain by "Mother Teresa of Jesus."

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* The enumeration shows how cosmopolitan were the Low Countries at this period, under the government of Philip II. " Frinch " may possibly mean " Walloon."

† Such an educationist as Madame de Maintenon, after having expected good results from the acting of plays by the pupils of St Cyr, came to the conclusion that they presented more dangers than the possible advantages warranted. Of course, the brilliant audience that attended the plays at St Cyr was very different from that which was admitted into the cloister of St Ursula, nor in this case was it a question of worldliness for the children, but of the breach of a strict rule of the Order. It must be understood that at the period there was no such distinction as that now existing between the monastic and the school buildings. Children were admitted into the enclosure at a very early age and remained in it till their education was completed, without leaving for holidays. This idea long obtained at the English Convent, Bruges. Till the middle of the last century, when a child was admitted, not even the mother was allowed to visit the school, and the day after the distribution of prizes was given to put all in order, and another scholastic year began ! " Autres temps, autres mœurs," but to judge by some old ladies, who till quite recently lived to testify to the results of the old system, the children were no less happy and certainly no less attached to their school than the modern girl, whose school life is passed under such very different conditions.

Sister Shirley gives us one instance of the difficulties incurred at St Ursula's, and of the ways in which they were met. "One of the English Nuns,* being very sick and at the point of death, her own mother dwelling in the town, hearing of her daughter being in such danger, came to the monastery to desire our Mother that she might come in to see her sick daughter. The Reverend Mother flatly denied her, because she said it would be a breach to the enclosure, and she would not do it by any means without special leave from the Archbishop. This she said, hoping thereby she would have been answered; but the motherly heart could not be so contented, but went to the Bishop herself, and obtained of him licence to go into the monastery to visit her daughter, which she brought to our Reverend Mother with the Bishop's hand and seal, which our Reverend Mother seeing, was somewhat troubled that there she must yield unto such an inconvenience, or hazard the Bishop's displeasure. Yet of the two, she rather chose to presume upon the Bishop's goodness, than to endanger the breaking of the enclosure; wherefore she took heart, and absolutely denied to accept of the Bishop's commission, for, as she said, the Bishop was not sufficiently informed concerning the state of the house, for we being of two nations, Flemish and English, and she being English that requested the favour, the other nation that had often desired the same, and had been denied, might justly take exception thereof, and so breed some disgust amongst us. Mrs. Allen, being not content, went again to the Bishop and complained that she could not be admitted to come into the Monastery, notwithstanding that she had brought with her the Bishop's licence. The Bishop, having heard her complaint, gave her no other answer than smiling said, 'I am sorry I have so few such Superiors; I would to God I had more of them,' and this was all the amends that she could have of her complaint, as she afterwards confessed herself to us."

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* Sister Helen Allen, a daughter of Cardinal Allen's eldest brother; she died in 1603, "a fervent religious and very hard to herself."

The troubles of the times added greatly to the responsibilities of Mother Margaret's charge. The atrocities committed by the Gueux, of which some account has been given in Part I of this work, were causing the utmost consternation, especially amongst priests and religious, against whom the fanatic mob perpetrated revolting cruelties. In 1572 (the year in which the Martyrs of Gorcum gave their lives for Christ) the insurgents marched through Brabant, under the leadership of the Prince of Orange, and on September 3 they were sighted approaching Louvain. At the sound of the tocsin the citizens rushed to arms, and from three in the morning till ten at night fought valiantly, inflicting heavy losses on the assailants. Mother Margaret and her Community knew well what they might expect at the hands of the Gueux, before whom the Bridgettines had fled from Mechlin and the Carthusians from Bruges. But though hourly awaiting death the eighty nuns gathered round their young Prioress, remaining calm within their convent walls, and even keeping up their religious exercises as far as circumstances allowed.

"It were a tragedy to report," writes Sister Shirley, "with what outcries the common people came to the monasteries and religious houses to relate the destruction of the city, whereupon many fled from their company and came to hard mishap. But our Mother seeing the danger so apparent, and they expecting nothing but sudden death by the soldiers, yet they performed their office in the choir.

"At which time also our Mother, about nine o'clock in the morning, ringing a little bell as the manner is to call the convent together, as well the lay-sisters as converses,* and all the nuns, who, being come altogether in the Chapter-house, she humbly asked forgiveness of them all, and admonished them to do the like to one another, which they did with great bitterness and sorrow, for they stood in two extremes, either of present death by wars or, at the best, to be dispersed without any hope of ever meeting. This sorrow was so great, as I have heard her tell, that if she had not had a firm trust in God, she could never have overcome it, for all their griefs were joined together in her heart, having the charge both of their bodies and their souls.

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* They were bound to enclosure and made the three essential vows of religion, but were not bound to the recitation of the Divine Office. They held the place of the "Donates" of Windesheim.

"So from the Chapter they went all together in the Choir to perform their Office (that of Prime), which she would never suffer to be omitted for any misery that fell unto them. Thus being in the Choir, there was raised a false alarm that the town was taken, and that every man must give his head to the sword. The Father of the Monastery, being a very holy man, and very desirous to animate them to die well, came up by a back door, and passing hastily through the Choir, where they were all set in prayer, with a loud voice and great fervency, he pronounced this sentence: 'Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus' (Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints). Then they all kneeled down and requested his blessing."

The Chronicle of St Monica's adds some details to this touching scene. It tells us that this zealous chaplain exhorted them that "they should now imitate their patroness St Ursula and her virgins, but as at that time one of the virgins* hid herself for fear, so now also one went from the rest and hid herself in some corner of the house, but the good Mother found her out, and wished her rather to keep with the rest. . . ." "She exhorted them earnestly," says Sister Shirley, "to hold together in one room, and not to separate themselves when the soldiers came in, for it had been the destruction of many monasteries in her knowledge."

The report that the enemy was in the town, and that people were being killed in the streets, proved to be a false alarm,† but all through that day of siege the lay-sisters did nothing but boil meat and get ready bread and beer for the soldiers, so that for a considerable time "the Reverend Mother had scarcely anything wherewith to provide the Community, the provisions being exhausted, and she having no money to buy more." "But the burghers agreeing with the Prince of Orange for a great sum of money,* the city was released, and for that time this affliction ceased."

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* "Apud Coloniam, sanctae Cordulae, quae una ex sodalibus sanctae Ursulae cum aliarum suppliciis et caede perterrita se occultasset, ejus rei poenitens, postridie se ultro patefecit, et novissima omnium martyrii coronam accepit" (*Roman Martyrology*, October 22).

† The whole account of this and other war troubles is very living to those who were at Bruges in the September and October of 1914, when rumours were spread that the Germans were at hand before they actually entered the town on October 14. During those weeks of expectation Communities from other towns were constantly arriving worn out with fatigue and the hardships they had undergone, carrying in bundles, a few things snatched up in haste, and asking for food and shelter, which were gladly given.

It was to be followed by many others, for, as Sister Shirley says, "It pleaseth our Lord often to prove His best beloved friends, as doth appear by this holy woman."

During the alarm caused by the approach of the enemy, she, with the advice of one or two "discreet sisters," had confided the ornaments and silver work belonging to the Church to the care of a trusty friend, who took it all away in a tun "as if it had been beer or wine." But the man died suddenly, without revealing to anyone where he had hidden the treasure. The matter came to be known in the town, and the Mother was sorely blamed for imprudence, and even slandered as having secretly made away with the riches of the Church, which were valued at about £200, a considerable sum in those days. It was only after twenty years that in a city three leagues from Louvain the tun was discovered; among its contents was found "a fine little image of St Christopher, and on it was engraven that it did belong to the Cloister of St Ursula's in Louvain, and all was restored to the Monastery as fair and fresh as when first delivered, without spot or blemish, though it had stood so many years in a low cellar."

In 1573 another trial befell Mother Margaret Clement, and her monastery; by some oversight the sluices of the town were left closed during a sudden thaw; the accumulated water breaking through, carried all before it, and flowing into the city, rose in some parts to the height of seventeen feet. The overflow was so sudden that "the religious sitting together in the work-chamber had much ado to escape drowning, if they had not with all speed gotten up into the high garrets. The Father Confessarius went also with the nuns, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Looking out of the windows they could scarcely see the tops of the trees in the orchard, and the walls thereabout fell on the ground, so that the enclosure lay wholly open, which was no small grief to the Mother, who had with so great labour and difficulty enclosed it.

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* He at first consented to withdraw on condition that the town would allow his supplies to be sent to him freely, but when the envoys from Louvain approached with the answer of the citizens he cunningly exacted, as an additional condition, the immediate payment of 16,000 florins, a sum the impoverished city had great difficulty in collecting.

The whole monastery was noisome by reason of the mire, and the breaking of walls and sewers. There was none so strong in the Community who had not their full burden of the cross; what then was that of the good Mother, who was constrained to bear the crosses of them all !"

The enclosure was quickly fenced about with boards, but the soldiers broke them down, and the Mother then had a wall of clay put up, but during a whole year she was fain to provide watch and ward both day and night to prevent the soldiers from again breaking through, and the religious watched every night in turns. "All this happened when she was but five years Prioress; this our elders would relate to us, and say that in all these tribulations they did find our Mother to be so staid and moderate, with such a resignation to the Will of God, and such a confidence in His goodness, that it was admirable to them all. And concerning that virtue of confidence in God, I have heard Dr. Jansonius report (a man eminent both for virtue and holiness), that he never dealt with any like her on that point, which made him often be confounded, she being a frail woman, to have such great courage and magnanimity, in such great and difficult matters, that he himself was wholly astonished at it."

The mention of Dr. Jansonius, who at this time was Mother Margaret's director, recalls a change that had been effected in the spiritual government of St Ursula's. Pope Martin V had placed it under the obedience of the Prior of the Canons Regular of the Monastery of Bethlehem in Louvain. The town was then in the diocese ruled over by the Prince Bishop of Liège, and when Philip II of Spain, with the sanction of Pius IV, reorganized the dioceses of Belgium in 1559, Louvain passed to the obedience of Cardinal Granvelle, the first Archbishop of Mechlin. Soon after the right of visitation was transferred from the Prior of Bethlehem to a delegate of the Archbishop, though the Canons Regular continued to act as chaplains to the nuns. Dr. Jansonius, Professor of Theology at the University, was one of the first of the secular clergy who acted as Visitor; as he is said to have espoused the opinions of Baius,* and to have imbued with them his more famous disciple Cornelius Jansenius of Ypres, author of the *Augustinus*, it is interesting to read that Mother Margaret, while under his spiritual guidance, received Holy Communion daily.

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* The doctrine of Baius undoubtedly sowed the seeds of the heresy which gave such an unenviable notoriety to the name of Cornelius Jansenius, author of the *Augustinus*. It is noticeable, that though Louvain was the cradle of Jansenius, no doctrinal errors, such as later on were the ruin of Port Royal, ever penetrated the cloister of St Ursula.

She had been previously directed in the ways of the interior life by Father Adriaensens, who was admitted into the Society of Jesus by Blessed Peter Faber, and appointed by St Ignatius Superior of the Jesuit College in Louvain. Her biographer mentions in more than one place the admiration which those who were thus acquainted with the working of grace in her soul conceived for her, but adds that she had a great horror of "much hanging on or inordinate affection to Ghostly Fathers," and she was urged inwardly to avoid the slightest tendency to this fault, for they who yield to it, "whilst they depend so much on a mortal man, neglect to make it their refuge in God from whom all their comfort must proceed." Father Adriaensens is probably the "very learned and zealous Jesuit" who, "having taken extraordinary pains with a soul under his care, and seeing little fruit thereof, began to be out of hope and sent for the Mother, saying he could do no more; but she replied with a great grace, saying, 'O good Father, how can you be so discouraged? What shall I then do, a poor and frail woman, that have not only one but many such cases to deal with? I beseech you, therefore, take a good heart and be not dismayed, but go forward in this good work, and you shall see that how much more the case is difficult, so much more will our Blessed Saviour assist your endeavour,' and she gave him motives to proceed; all which he very humbly received at her hands, and afterwards confessed that the good Mother's lesson had profited him more in dealing with souls than many years' study, for that which she taught was grounded on her experience more than on any learning, which experience in my opinion is ye best mistress."

Mother Clement might indeed say that she had many difficult cases to deal with, for as the fame of her holiness and her wonderful power over souls spread throughout the country, "whosoever had any such troublesome persons as they could no way with, they brought them straight unto her, and her charity was such, and her zeal for souls so great, that she had not the power to deny them, how desperate soever their cause were. The Archbishop himself was fain to use her help in such difficult matters, and hath wonderfully admired at her prudency therein." "Oh! would to God," exclaims Sister Elizabeth Shirley in the course of her narrative, "I were any ways able either by words or pen to declare her great labour and travail to gain souls to God; her devout prayers, her watchings, her tears, her continual exhortations, her long suffering with such unspeakable patience without any show of wearisomeness therein, when they were such crooked persons as were tedious and irksome to the whole company, insomuch that the nun that tended her in her chamber would sometimes say unto her: 'Good Lord, Mother, what do you mean to trouble yourself with these unruly persons? Surely they are neither profitable for the house nor yet for themselves.' Unto whom she would answer with great modesty and gravity, 'O child, they be more dear to me than any people under heaven.' Moreover, she said these words were seldom out of her mind: *Peter, dost thou love Me? Pasce oves meas* '; for she thought without love it was impossible to be a Superior. Or she would sometimes sweetly with a mild word reply and say: 'O Sisters, if we knew how dear and precious their souls are in the sight of Almighty God, we would afford them willingly what help we could.'

"In the day time she sat to hear their difficulties, but if they would let her rest in the night it would have been something. But that might not be neither; for they would come to her bedside all the hours of the night, when she was sound asleep, and awake her, saying: 'Mother, can you sleep, and see me so afflicted?' At which she would never seem to be troubled or moved, but in all sweet manner, sat up in her bed, and gave them all the comfort she could, till she saw them somewhat comforted, and then entreated them to go to bed and rest. After that there should perhaps come one or two more, and so take up the rest of the night. This life she lived so long as I knew her. One thing she would make great moan for, that by reason she broke her sleep so much, she could not come to Matins, so often as she would fain have done, although I am well assured that she watched more than any of us that did come to Matins. Yet would she not fail to be at Prime and the first Mass, and after that to hold an hour of recollection, in which time she would not be troubled with any other affairs."

It was indeed through her union with God in prayer that Mother Margaret drew from its very course that wonderful love for souls and that burning zeal for God's glory which made her " never respect her own ease in anything that might further the honour and glory of God or hinder sin." Many there were who confessed that " next to God they did ascribe to her the whole cause of their salvation."

No explanation is given of what seems to have been a strange action of the Archbishop in sending persons who were considered " hopeless cases " to live in the enclosure, so as to be under the influence of the Prioress, and it must certainly have been extremely trying to the nuns. Some of these persons were, says the MS, " corporally possessed," and they would confess that the enemy used every endeavour to prevent them from disclosing his suggestions to the Mother, urging them " to conceal them from ' her ' (for he would never name her) for a fortnight or ten days, or one whole day, or at least for two hours."

One of these unfortunate creatures, having been rebuked by Mother Margaret, "thought within herself how she might be revenged, and ye old enemy that never sleepeth put it into her mind to poison her, which she straightway put into execution, and getting ye strongest poison she could procure, put it into her porridge, but thanks be to God, it never took effect. Afterwards, this person falling sick and being at the point of death, sent for our Reverend Mother and told her the same with great contrition, asking forgiveness, and I remember this lesson ye Mother gave me thereupon, that she always had such confidence in ye blessing before meat that it took away all hurt and danger that might come thereat."

The story is paralleled in the life of St Benedict, but that was in a more barbarous age, yet at the very period in which Mother Clement lived we find St Teresa fearing lest an attempt should be made to poison Father Gratian.*

Perhaps one of the reasons that made Mother Margaret succeed where all others failed was her deep respect for souls, even for those who had fallen lowest. " She would never show little account of them," says Sister Shirley, " were they ever so full of miseries and imperfections," for she said that the nature of man is too noble to be subjected to contempt, and she would severely reprehend any of her own religious who might seem to contemn such frail persons, saying: "Let her that is without fault cast the first stone." "Nevertheless, she would correct those persons so troublesome, with such gravity and majesty as gave them great cause of fear and reverence towards her, joined with an affectionate love."

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* See Letter CCXCVIII and Note in the complete edition of the Saint's Letters, edited by Père Grégoire de St Joseph, O.C.D. (Poussielgue, Rue Cassette, Paris, 1900).

Sister Shirley tells us an incident concerning one of the religious, whom she does not name because she was yet living. This nun, being assaulted by a violent temptation, went to confide in her Prioress, and returning to her cell still greatly troubled, strove to occupy herself with some work, but suddenly found herself completely delivered from the temptation, and "pondering what this might be which moved her heart so much, she thought she heard one speaking within her saying. 'Go, she prayeth for thee before such a picture in the Choir'; and going thither she found the good Mother kneeling before the picture, all bedewed with tears, unto whom she said, 'Good Mother, where have you been all this while?' and she, answering, said, 'Child, I have been praying for you,' and the religious told me that from that time she had no more that temptation, such was the effect of the Mother's prayers."

Mother Margaret was a great lover of the Choir and the Divine Office, and would not be absent from it, "what business soever she had, saying it was all her comfort in every distress." On high festivals especially, her behaviour during the Office moved all to devotion, being most exact in every ceremony, and showing such grace and fervour as was admirable. She would say that at such times the devil was more busy, and therefore she must watch the more diligently over herself and her flock, "lest the ravening wolf should do any hurt to her little lambs."

When she became blind in her extreme old age, the Sisters would wonder to see "a woman of her years kneel so long with her hands folded together, without any stay to her feeble body." She communicated daily with great devotion, and the nun who led her to the place where she was to receive the Blessed Sacrament, would often say she found such inward consolation in kneeling by her that she could not express it.

"On bridal days [*i.e.*, Clothing and Profession days], she would sit up so long at her prayers that it seemed by her preparation she was herself the Bride."

Sister Shirley dwells at some length on the virtues and the wise government of Mother Clement, giving us now and then quaint and shrewd remarks of her own, acknowledging frankly her own imperfect feelings in order to set forth the virtues of her Prioress.

But we can only refer briefly to much that she tells us; and all that concerns Mother Clement's share in the English Foundation must be reserved for another chapter, though it throws a clear light on her prudence, charity, courage, and humility.

They are virtues which were constantly shown in the long life of this holy woman, who perpetuated the teaching and the traditions which she had received from one whom Blessed Thomas More loved "as his own daughter."

Sister Shirley tells us how Mother Margaret "corrected nothing more" than complaints, or that repeating of the words of others which is sometimes indulged in under pretext of giving timely and friendly warnings; she herself would never blame others even to clear herself of false and injurious imputations, as when she was accused of having alienated the church ornaments, or when both at Brussels and Louvain she was publicly spoken against for having dismissed a priest who was not suitable for the direction of nuns. On the last occasion Sister Shirley, after vainly urging the Mother to say a word by which she might easily have cleared herself, exclaimed: "Lord, Mother, I marvel you can be silent at so many things that are told you. Methinks I could never endure it." But Mother Margaret answered that her heart was so settled in God as to be no ways moved thereat, for she fastened her hope on God, and she reproved Sister Shirley, saying: "Daughter, it were not fit you should have anything to do with others till those passions are more mortified."

We hear, too, of the unction with which this holy Prioress spoke in Chapter, "yet," adds her biographer, "I doe protest that her own good lyf and manners did chapter me more than all the rest."

Those among the religious whom she saw favoured by "some great preventing grace of God," and for whom she feared any shade of spiritual pride, she would "chapter sharply for small faults, remembering the words of St Paul: 'Lest the greatness of revelations should puff me up,' and what he says in another place, that tribulation giveth understanding."

In 1578 the plague broke out in Louvain, and in the Cloister of St Ursula there died no fewer than twenty persons in the course of three months. "This was a great affliction, and there was not any of the company that hoped for their life." The Prioress visited the sick daily, going as near as she might, and it was a great grief to her to be forbidden to enter the place where they were, for she would have desired to assist them till their last breath, but she would go to the windows and speak to them " with such fervency of spirit to strengthen and console them as was admirable, and some of them who afterwards recovered would say that her spiritual words did more comfort them than their sickness did afflict them, seeing from what love and fervour they proceeded."

Among the sick was one whose sanctity the Mother held in high esteem, and she commanded her " in some sort charging her in virtue of holy obedience " that if it were the Will of God she should obtain of His goodness that the mortality might cease, and she be the last to die of the plague. "The which the sick nun promised faithfully as far as lay in her power, and by the ordinance of God she was the last to die of the disease, though many more lay sick at that time. This we may impute to the goodness of God, & to ye great faith and confidence ye holy Mother had in ye virtue of obedience."

To War and Pestilence succeeded Famine, and many Communities dispersed on account of the impossibility of obtaining food. Mother Clement was advised to do the same when the sole nourishment of the nuns was of such bread as we know under the name of " war bread," and they had but an insufficient quantity of it. But though leave was given for some to go for a time to their friends, she remained in the cloister with the greater part of the Community, and was indefatigable in her endeavours to procure them food, going out herself to beg, with the approbation of the Archbishop.

Her poverty, mortification, and love of hard work were worthy of the Congregation of Windesheim in its most palmy days of fervour. Even when she became quite blind she would wind thread or find some work she could do, for she would never be idle, nor would she accept of the alleviations the Sisters would fain have forced on her. Like her holy Father St Augustine, she had a special love of order and cleanliness, but she would never accept to be served by others, until her blindness rendered some help unavoidable.

In 1606 Mother Margaret Clement kept her Golden Jubilee of religious life. Sister Shirley tells of "the sung Mass with a whole sett of veawalls [viols], of the Church ceremony, and the decoration of the Choir and cloister, all hung overhead with green cords"; of the gifts offered; "every one devising to doe some servis or else they were not well contented." "The young ones," she says, "thought they could never do enough for our owlde Mother, and the elders were busy finding some pretty holy recreation out of ye Scriptures, so that every one found something to show her love and affection."

The account of the happy feast gives us a charming picture of the charity and peace which reigned in St Ursula's cloister, and "the religious of the town being also desirous to congratulate our Mother on this joy brought with them their best voices and some instruments. The first day there came the Choristers of St Peter's, the second day the Austin Friars, the third day the Franciscans, the Fourth the Canons Regular, and so the whole week was brought over with great jubilation."

The townsfolk also desired to do honour to the holy Mother who had lived so long among them; "the first day came the magistrates, the second the burghers, and after them the poor neighbours, besides all the English and many that came from other towns with her two nephews, Dr. Clement and Dr. Redmond, who also brought the Duke's* musicians."

It was soon after this Jubilee that Mother Margaret became totally blind; "having kept Chapter in the morning as the manner is, it being then broad day, she perceived her sight was wholly gone, wherefore she said to one of the religious: 'It is now time for me to leave off keeping Chapter,' and soon after sent to inform the head superiors (to the great grief of the whole Convent) that she desired release of her charge."

Dr. Jansonius came with another visitor, and the Community being assembled, they declared the reason of their coming, and then called for the old Mother. "She being brought in blind by some that led her, she humbly kneeled down and would have prostrated herself, but they would not permit her. She begged to be absolved from her Office, to which they acceded, saying they were sorry for the loss the Convent would incur thereby, but she replied there were enough who could do it much

* The Archduke Albert.

better; they requested that she should still assist the new Prioress with her counsel, and keep her place next to the Subprioress, but this she would by no means accept. After this, she was led to her own place, with many a weeping eye of the religious."

"From this time," says Sister Shirley, "she wholly gave herself to prayer and meditation."

A little later the English Foundation began to be treated of, and in 1609, when she was in her seventieth year, Mother Clement left the cloister of St Ursula's, where she had lived from childhood, and which she had governed for so many years. "Her zeal was such," says Sister Shirley, "that she never respected the great discommodities and inconvenience that she should find in a house having nothing but bare walls. It was admirable to see with what humility and true subjection she carried herself towards the Sister that was appointed to govern . . . as if she had been the least, so that the Superior was sometimes abashed and ashamed at so great humility, and would remind her of her age, and of her exemptions as Jubilarian, but she would say: 'God forbid I should come hither amongst you to seek myself or my own liberty; far be it from me, but rather the more I have gone before you in my years and in my profession the more I must give example by my life and manners.'"

It is touching to read how, in the new foundation, she was "as fervent to help as if she had been a young nun; she sang the versicles in the Choir when need was, which she could sing without book." She was appointed grate-Sister, and would remain near the grate so as to "grope unto the door when any did ring and take their errand, but most part of the day was spent in prayer."

God gave the good old Mother the joy of seeing two of her great-nieces professed in the new foundation;* they were the grandchildren of that sister of hers who had so longed to be free from the restraint of the cloister, but who had sent her own daughter to be brought up at St Ursula's. Mother Margaret greatly rejoiced at this

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* Helen Clement had married Thomas Prideaux, Esq., of County Devon. Their only child, Magdalen, also brought up at St Ursula's, married William Copley, son of Lord Thomas Copley, Baron de Welles. He "suffered much for the Faith," and the Lord Chamberlain, the Queen's uncle, was his sore enemy, because he refused to marry his sister, and took for wife "one of Sir John Luttrell's daughters, an heir of the blood royal who for her beauty liked him better." Their two daughters, Mary and Helen, were the great-nieces at whose Profession the old Mother rejoiced so much.

Profession, and would often say, "It is now time I goe to my home, for I have here two pawns to leave in my place." And Sister Shirley records in words of touching simplicity how a few days after her kinswomen had taken their vows, the venerable old Mother, "as it were reflecting on her death, sitting at the high table by the Mother that then was, being very merry in recreation, said unto her: 'Good Mother, give me leave to do as the swan doth, that is to sing you a song now before my death'; which the Prioress, answering, said: 'Good Mother, let us hear it.' And then the worthy old Mother from the exceeding Joy and Jubilation of her heart sang a devout song of Jesus, with such a voice that all the company admired. It was a Dutch ditty, and the matter was of the Spouse and the Bridegroom.

"This was her last, for the next day being Friday, she sitting in her place in the Choir and reading with the Convent a Dirge for the month,* she was taken by a burning fit yet would not stir till the Office was out, and then she was led to her cell and lived four days after, for the fever was most violent, but she showed great patience therein.

"It happened I spake to her, and bewailed the case of a person who was not yet settled amongst us, fearing lest by temptation she should depart, but she said to me: 'Child, you shall see by God His grace, she shall overcome all things.' But I being no sooner gone, she fell heartily to her prayers, so earnestly and so loud that our Reverend Father, coming to see her, heard plainly the words, which was contrary to her wonted manner, for she seldom used to move her lips in prayer, but sometimes I have seen the tears trickle down without her changing countenance, but now being blind and seeing nobody by her, she thought she might speak out her mind to Almighty God. Our Father sitting still till he thought she had done, said aloud unto her: 'Amen, Mother!' whereat she startled, saying: 'O is there any body there?' But soon began again to pray, and we might know it was for some person that needed fortitude and constancy, thereby I gathered that as she had all her life withstood the wicked enemy in the snares that he lays for poor religious, so she persevered unto her last breath. The day before she died the Prioress came to her, saying: 'Good Mother, I humbly beseech you to be mindful of us poor children when you shall come into the heavenly wine cellar to be inebriated.' And the Mother gripped her by the hand, and said: 'O Mother, shall I come to drink of that wine indeed?' Presently she called for the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Oils, which she received with great devotion. After midnight she fell into a deadly sleep, and at four o'clock in the morning she gave up her spirit to God."

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* It is still the custom to recite monthly the Office of the Dead for the members of the Community, their parents, and also benefactors whose anniversaries occur during the month.

This was in the year 1612; Mother Margaret was seventy-two years of age, and had been professed fifty-five, of which thirty-eight had been spent as Prioress.

"And now," says Sister Shirley, as she concludes the *Life* which was so evidently a labour of love, "we may a littell lift up our ies to Heaven, to see ye Jubele ye Angells make there, who enjoy now that holy soul for all eternity, to wh^{c} Joy and Jubele God of his mercy bring us all. Amen."

III

DAUGHTERS AND SISTERS OF ENGLISH MARTYRS

During the religious persecution in England great numbers of English Catholics sought refuge in the provinces subject to the King of Spain to whom Pius V addressed a brief, dated February 21, 1567, exhorting him to receive and succour these servants of God; and many of them obtained from him small pensions, on which they were often entirely dependent. Some of these refugees had come over so early as the reign of Edward VI; many more followed them on the accession of Elizabeth, and after the Northern Rising there was a still further increase in their number.

In Belgium, they established themselves in Brussels, Bruges, Ghent, Mechlin, Antwerp, and other towns, but especially in Louvain, which had a large English colony.

Amongst these exiles were the Lady Jane Dormer, grandmother to the Duchess of Feria, and Lady Hungerford, her sister; Mrs. Allen, sister-in-law of the Cardinal of that name; Sir Francis Englefield; William Rastell, nephew to Blessed Thomas More, who married Mother Margaret Clement's sister Winifred; Blessed John Storey and his family; Anne, Countess of Northumberland, widow of Blessed Thomas Percy; the Earl of Westmoreland, and his uncles Christopher and Cuthbert Neville, and John Neville, a knight. To Louvain came also old Richard Norton, father and brother of martyrs, and many other of the gallant gentlemen who had joined the Northern Rising of 1569—Radcliffes, Tempests, Dacres, and Markenfields.

After the tragedy of Fotheringay, Mary Stuart's maids of honour, Barbara Mowbray and Elspeth Curll also betook themselves to Flanders, where they found, besides the English, many Scotch exiles such as Jane Hamilton, Elizabeth and Margaret Maitland, William Sinclair, and other adherents of the Queen of Scots.

Dom Bede Camm, writing of Louvain at this period, says that many a sacred spot in the old Flemish city "still speaks eloquently of the exiles, the confessors and martyrs of our race, who there found a refuge, for a time at least, from the cruel persecution raging against all they held most dear and sacred in Elizabethan England. Still we may find the brass or monumental slab on the floor of many a church and convent chapel inscribed with familiar names. Still as we thread the narrow streets we seem to catch glimpses of their forms. There surely passes the Blessed John Storey in his blood-red Doctor's gown, or the martyred Canon of St Martin's, Laurence Vaux,* in his white habit and rochet. . . . Or we may pass a Convent . . . and lo, a little door in the wall seems to open, and we behold blind old Mother Clement led forth at the head of a little procession of English nuns, to found the new Convent of St Monica's, with few resources but faith and hope and love, and the sacred relics of Blessed Thomas More which were her dowry."*

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* Laurence Vaux, the only Englishman whom we know to have belonged to the Congregation of Windesheim, may, we hope, be soon numbered among those whom the Church recognizes as Martyrs. He is now one of the forty-four *dilati*, the introduction of whose Cause is postponed for fuller evidence. He was born in Lancashire, and was educated at Manchester and Oxford, where he took the degree of B.D. In 1558 he became Warden of Manchester College, and the following year, when the Queen's Commissioners visited the College, Vaux hid the Church plate and the College deeds, and did not answer the summons to appear. In 1561 he fled to Louvain and there opened a school for the children of the English exiles, whose daughters could receive instruction in their own language at St Ursula's.

After some years he returned to England to publish the decision of Pius V, that Catholics could not attend the Protestant services without mortal sin. His arrest was ordered, but he again escaped to Louvain, where he sought admission among the Canons Regular of St Martin's, though he was then over fifty years of age. Soon after his Profession he was elected Subprior. He must have been well known to the nuns of St. Monica's, and he may have hoped to follow their example by founding an English Community of Canons Regular to work on the English mission; but in 1580 he was sent for to Rheims by papal authority, and despatched to England to help those who were labouring there.

He was arrested when he reached Rochester, and having acknowledged the authorship of "a popish catechism," which he had compiled for the use of the English in Louvain, he was thrown into prison, from whence he wrote a letter to his Prior at St Martin's. In it he says that the prisoners in the Gatehouse, Westminster, where he was first confined, are "valde bene tractati in mensa," but in 1583 he was transferred to the Clink, where he is said to have died of starvation. The notice in Sanderus is as follows:

"Laurentius Vausaeus Anglus S.T.B.f. ac presbyter, quondam canonicus sarburiensis necnon praeses collegii mancestriensis, anno aetatis 55, ob catholicam fidem ab Anglia exsul, habitum sanctae religionis assumpsit, super quem mox sacerdotalibus ornamentis indutus summum sacrum decantavit; evolutoque probationis anno, professionem emisit, pauco postea tempore subprioris officio functus, in Angliam profectus, ibidem ob catholicae fidei confessionem in carcerem conjectus et fame enectus, martyrii coronam adeptus est 1585."

"Scripsit ibidem insignem Catechismum pro suis Anglis Anglice,"

It was only after the resignation of Mother Clement in 1606 that the question of an English foundation from St Ursula's began to be treated of. The election of her successor had been a disputed one. It was held in presence of the Visitor, Dr. John de Castro,† afterwards Bishop of Ruremonde, brother to the Subprioress, Sister Winifred, who obtained seven votes, while an English nun, Sister Mary Wiseman, had twenty-five. But the latter not having the age required by the Council of Trent, the Visitor declared Sister Winifred duly elected. Advice was given to appeal to Rome against this decision, and the nuns must have remembered how Mother Margaret Clement had been confirmed in her office in spite of the like deficiency in years. They communicated their intention to the Visitor, "who took the matter very ill." Nevertheless, a form of petition was drawn up, which all were to sign, but when it was brought to the old Mother, she flatly refused to set her hand thereto, saying, "for her part she would stand to the censure of her superiors, and would seek no further." This sufficed to make all give up the idea, and "all humbly vowed obedience to the new Mother." But Dr. de Castro, being "incensed against the English for their supposed repugnance, commanded that they should all come before him to acknowledge their fault and ask forgiveness. This they felt hard, for they considered they had done no wrong, but rather had suffered it; . . . all except the old Mother, whose manner was to turn all things to the best," for she said to a nun who protested (probably the somewhat impetuous Sister Shirley), "No, child, I take it for no wrong, but from the hand of Almighty God, whose blessed Will it is, and I do easily submit my will thereunto, for we have

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adds Sanderus in his *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae*, p. 127. (See also Gillow's *Dictionary of English Catholics* and *The Catholic Encyclopedia.*)

* *William Cardinal Allen* (St Nicholas' Series). Burns Oates and Washbourne, London.

† Alias Geeraerts van der Borcht.

no surer token to know the Will of God but by our superiors."

So the Visitors being come, she was the first to begin, which she did upon her knees with such humility and submission that all admired and many were moved to tears.

The English lived peaceably under the new Prioress, whose great virtue, wisdom, discretion, and interior spirit they all recognized. They embraced with alacrity the hardships of a life of which some idea has been given in the account of Sister Woodford, and "though they had been brought up most tenderly and daintily in their parents' or friends' houses, nevertheless, for the love of Christ, unto whom they were espoused, they did willingly accommodate themselves to the hard diet of the cloister, dressed after the Dutch manner, and they would be as merry with each other as if they had been in the world amongst all dainties and pleasures, also they assisted one another in all their necessities with great love, so that what poverty took away charity supplied; the English nuns also being young helped the old Dutch religious in their cells to go to bed, and when they needed it, made their beds and swept their cells with joy and humility for God's sake, such as might in the world have been their chambermaids."

But although the different nationalities dwelt thus together in peace and amity, verifying the words: "Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor," the English nuns were aware that they were less likely to be joined by others of their own nation than had been the case when they were governed by an English Prioress; and the Lady Mary Percy, having erected an English Monastery at Brussels in 1599, it seemed to the Canonesses that it would be to "the greater honour and glory of God" that they should, in like manner, make an English Foundation for those of their nation who should be called to serve God under the Rule of St Augustine. This foundation they looked on as "a fore-passage to England," for it was their desire to help towards the restoration of religious life in their own country.

Some of the English, therefore, "moved this design unto the old Mother, who liked very well thereof, and withal, agreed to be one of the first herself, although she was blind and aged but her desire to promote a work so much to God's glory made her willingly desire to consent thereto. This animated the others much and gave them courage to proceed in their determination."

The Chronicle of St Monica's, Louvain, has been edited by Dom Adam Hamilton, and it gives the full story of the foundation made from St Ursula's in 1609.* We will, therefore, content ourselves with but a short account of the difficulties incurred in the undertaking, which are told with many a quaint detail in the Chronicle.

There were twenty-five English nuns at the time of Mother Clement's resignation. For many years she and Sister Elizabeth Woodford had been alone of their nation, but the year after the death of the latter, Sister Catherine Pigott (or Bygod) had joined the Community; she died during her noviceship, and Sister Grace Neville, who entered a few years later, died after only four years of Profession. It was only in 1592 that the stream of English vocations began to flow in, and Mother Margaret, who "had accounted herself but a barren mother," had the consolation of receiving "manie happie children out of England."

The first of these was Frances Felton, with whom came Mary Best, who was to be one of the foundresses of the English Convent, Bruges. So "the long heroic line" began with martyr blood, for no fewer than three members of the Felton family suffered death or imprisonment for the Faith. Blessed John Felton, the first of the martyrs under Elizabeth, was hanged for affixing the Bull of Excommunication against her to the gate of the Bishop of London's palace; Ven. Thomas Felton, his son, some time page to the old Lady Lovel, became a priest and suffered the same death as his father in 1558; and a George Felton was in prison for "the Mass" in 1561.

After Sister Frances Felton and Sister Mary Best many daughters and sisters or near kinswomen of the martyrs entered the Flemish cloister in quick succession.

"Looking round the stalls of the Choir in the year 1600," says Dom Adam Hamilton, "one would have seen there Anne Clitheroe, the daughter of Venerable Margaret, the gentle martyr of York; Margaret and Helen Garnett, sisters to the martyred Provincial of the English Jesuits, whose nephew was one of our venerable martyrs; Susan Laburn, or Laybourne, one of whose childish reminiscences was her visit to her father, the martyred James Laybourne, as he lay in chains awaiting his execution; Ann and Dorothy Rookwood, in whose saintly family fines and the dungeon were household words; Bridget and Mary Wiseman, whose parents had been condemned to death for harbouring priests; Frances Burrows, who at eleven years of age, though threatened with instant death, had saved a hunted priest from pursuivants; Helen and Catherine Allen, nieces to the great Cardinal, whose mother had barely escaped with life from the persecutors. . . . There are few nobler pictures in the annals of religious Communities than that of those brave old days of this illustrious English House of cloistered religious."

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* Father Morris, S.J., also published large extracts from the Chronicle in his *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, under the title of "St Monica's in War, Pestilence, and Famine."

A manuscript in the British Museum (No. 5813), giving some "Notes concerning the Monastery of St Augustine's Order in Louvain," says that the religious have been "of the ancientest families in England." Indeed, there is scarcely an old Catholic family which has not had its representatives among the Canonesses at Louvain, Newton Abbot, or the English Convent, Bruges.

The Registers of Profession of these communities contain the names of Arundel, Bedingfield, Blundell, Copley, Constable, Clifford, Gage, Gifford, Howard, Herbert, Jerningham, Neville, More, Pole, Radcliffe, Rookwood, Throckmorton, Tichbourne, Vaughan, Vavasour, Wiseman, and many others. They are the names of families who were found "faithful 'midst the faithless," whose sons resisted unto blood in the cause of God and His Vicar, and who later on showed that same fidelity to the hapless Stuart dynasty.

The annals of the Communities sprung from St Ursula's are, therefore, not without interest to the historian and to the genealogist, but what must appeal to the heart of the spiritual descendants of the first members of St Monica's is the fact that they were the children and kinswomen of those "anointed Kings of Tyburn Tree,"[*]

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[*] Francis Thompson, *To the English Martyrs.* Dom Adam Hamilton gives the following list of the Martyrs with whom the nuns of St Monica's claimed kinship: "Blessed Thomas More, Chancellor of England; Blessed Margaret Plantagenet, Countess of Salisbury; Blessed Humphrey Middlemore, Carthusian; Blessed Adrian Fortescue, Knight of St John; Blessed John Felton; Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.; Ven. Thomas Garnet, S.J.; Ven. George Haydock, Priest; Ven. Joseph Lambton, Priest; Ven. Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel; Ven. William Howard, Viscount Stafford; Ven. Margaret Clitheroe; James Radcliffe, Earl of Derwentwater; Walter Coleman, O.S.F.; Henry Garnet, S.J.; James Layburne and others."

who "poured out the eager cup" of their blood for the Lord Christ, while their daughters and sisters gladly went into exile to serve Him as the Bridegroom of their souls.

The two nuns who took the first steps towards the erection of an English Monastery were Sister Catherine Allen and Sister Elizabeth Shirley, cousin to Father Gerard, S.J., who had undergone such terrible torture in the Tower. These two asked the consent of the Prioress of St Ursula's to their design, "which she gave willingly, promising to assist them in all she could"; but the Community were not all well pleased at the decision, especially when they heard they were to lose the much-loved "old Mother," under whom nearly all had been professed. Sister Shirley met all difficulties with courage and wisdom, and when things seemed most desperate, for great opposition was raised from without, she went to the old Mother and "made her moan to her and asked her counsel what to do."

Dr. Cæsar Clement, nephew to Mother Margaret, was their chief helper, writing sometimes to Rome, sometimes to England in their behalf. Five hundred pounds were promised them from England, and a suitable house was found not far from St Ursula's. It belonged to the Benedictine Abbot of Vlierbeke, and had previously been the town refuge of a great Monastery founded by St Trudo in the seventh century. The Archbishop, Mathias van den Hove, drew up a deed by which he released those who were to go to the new foundation from their obedience to the Prioress of St Ursula's, and appointed the feast of St Scholastica (February 10, 1609) for their departure.

On the eve Sister Shirley, with the permission of the Prioress, went round to all who held offices to beg for what they could spare, and received Church vessels and ornaments from the Sacristan, linen from the Vestiarian, pewter plates and dishes from the Refectorian, and pots and pans from the lay-Sisters. Some breviaries and books of plainsong were also given. "When, therefore, Sister Shirley had gotten what she could from the officers, she showed it all to the Mother of the Cloister, who was well content to let her have those things, so they packed them up against the next day with their bedding and habit. But as for money, Sister Shirley had but five shillings in her purse (which her friends had sent her for a token) to begin house withal."

The British Museum MS. already cited says: "We began without Founder or Foundress, relying only on Divine Providence."

The account of the parting as given in the Chronicle is touching in its simplicity:

"Upon St Scholastica's day in the morning they were all called to the Chapter House, both nuns and lay Sisters, then those that were to depart acknowledged their faults, as the manner is; the old Mother beginning first spake so humbly, and with such fervour desired pardon for whatever might in the time of her government have given them cause of offence, that she made them almost all to weep, and the Dutch Mother asked also of them pardon in behalf of herself and the Congregation. After this they heard a singing Mass of our Blessed Lady and communicated and so took their leave, but at the parting was much weeping on both sides, especially some were so grieved to part from the old Mother that for a long time after they could not cease from tears."

The names of the first seven Sisters to go forth were as follows: Mother Margaret Clement, Sister Catherine Allen, Sister Margaret Garnet, whose brother Father Henry Garnet, Provincial of the Jesuits, was martyred in 1606,* and her nephew Ven. Thomas Garnet suffered two years later; Sister Elizabeth Shirley who was to fill the office of Superior and Procuratrix till the first elections could be held; Sister Barbara Wilford, daughter of Thomas Wilford, Esquire of Essex, who suffered much for his conscience;† Sister Mary Welch, niece of Mr. Southcote, a well-known Catholic. With these there went also Sister Elizabeth Dumford, a lay-Sister.

An English priest had offered himself to be their chaplain; this was Father John Fenn,‡ brother to a martyr, the Ven. James Fenn, executed at Tyburn in 1574.

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* He may be regarded as a martyr to the seal of confession, for the cause of his death was his not having divulged the Gunpowder Plot, of which he had heard only under that sacred seal. Cardinal Bellarmine speaks of him as incomparable in learning and holiness of life. (See Gillow's *Dictionary of English Catholics*.)

† Sister Barbara Wilford died in 1618. The Chronicle speaks of her charity, humility, and great love of penance: "even in the world, when she was with her cousin the Lady Herbert, she would take most hard disciplines all of a gore blood."

‡ He had been chaplain to Sir William Stanley's regiment and came to St Ursula's in 1601. He wrote *Vita quorundam Martyrum in Anglia*, translated the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* into English, and Cardinal Fisher's *Method of arriving at the Highest Perfection in Religion* into Latin. His translation into English of an Italian *Life of St Catherine of Siena* was reprinted in 1867.

The nuns went forth on foot, two and two, wearing long black cloaks over their white habits " to make the less show," but notwithstanding the people ran out of their houses to see them and some said: " O they knew the old Mother of St Ursula's " who came last, led by Father Fenn on one side, and Mr. Worthington on the other. They went all first to St Peter's Church, to visit our Blessed Lady's Picture of Miracle there, for so the old Mother had desired leave of the Bishop that they might do, and they heard Mass said by Father Fenn.

The new Convent was dedicated to Our Blessed Lady's Conception, to the glorious Archangel St Michael, and to St Monica, and was always known under this last appellation.

The first care of the nuns on arriving was to dress an altar in the little chapel, and Father Fenn having hallowed some water, they sang an antiphon and collect in honour of the Blessed Trinity, then the *Ave Regina Coelorum* to Our Lady, and the antiphons and collects of St Augustine and St Monica.

" The gallery leading to the chapel served them for a Choir, but it was so narrow that when they bowed at the *Gloria Patri* their heads did almost meet together. They began to sing Mass on Sundays and holidays, but being so few they thought they might omit singing our Lady's Mass on Saturdays, but good Father Fenn would have them sing that too; yea, he said that if they would not he would begin to sing it himself, but they were willing enough to strain themselves to honour our Lady."

Mother Margaret could not be content till they had the Blessed Sacrament always in their little chapel, and an English student in the town gave five shillings to buy a lamp. From the first these kinswomen of those who had been ready to die for the Mass were favoured by having a great number celebrated in their chapel each day, for " the Irish Franciscan Friars beginning then also their Cloister had desired that they might say their masses in the parish Church, but they denied them saying they could not allow them candles and wine, so they came hither and desired they might in the morning from six to eleven or twelve say all their masses, offering to pay for the expenses, but they did not for they were not able."

The nuns needed the support these many Masses must have given them, for they had much to suffer; their poverty was extreme, the £500 promised them from England never reached them, and "so our Sisters were deprived of the greatest help they expected, but Our Lord Himself would be the Provider of this house, and has not failed to help it from time to time by means of such as He moved thereunto, and their confidence in Him remained firm through the counsel and the encouragement of the old Mother."

The English in the town assisted them, and some of them were allowed small sums by their friends for their maintenance, and small alms—half a crown, or "a piece of money about the value of an Angel"—are gratefully recorded; the townsfolk, too, were kind to the exiles, and would sometimes bring dainties for the sick.

The evil reports spread about them were a harder trial than the poverty they bore with so much alacrity. "There wanted not some," says the Chronicle, "who enlarged their tongues," and reports were spread that they had left St Ursula's without the Archbishop's sanction. They therefore obtained a letter from the Archbishop stating the truth of the matter, and they sent copies of it to England, to Rome, to Father Parsons and the English there.

Another trouble proved but passing. One day there came to the Monastery the Infanta's* ghostly Father, who asked to see the Superior, and told her he was sent by the Princess to view the house; he was allowed to enter and went all over the building, and when asked his intention he answered that it was to take the house to make of it a cloister for the Teresians, whom the Infanta designed to send thither. Sister Shirley, who was yet holding the place of Superior, fell on her knees and besought the Father "to have compassion on poor banished religious." He was much moved, and said he knew the Infanta would not require it under the circumstances, but she had heard they meant to leave it, and some time after sent them a message that "her Highness was content they should enjoy this house, seeing they were in possession thereof."

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* Isabella, daughter of Philip II and wife of the Archduke Albert. At her request the Ven. Anne of Jesus had founded a Carmelite Convent at Brussels in 1607. The first convent of English Carmelites was founded at Antwerp in 1609 and is now represented by Lanherne. Its foundations at Lierre (1619) and Hoogstraete (1648) are now represented by the Convents of Darlington and Chichester.

The purchase money of the house (£800) was only fully paid in 1610; the nuns' kinsfolk in England were generous in their alms and the Convent prospered, for, says the Chronicle, Our Lord forgot not his poor servants, and they were confident that the trials which had not been wanting were permitted by Him only "that it might appear the more plainly that it was a work of His own Hand."

Before a year was out nine more nuns had come from St Ursula's. The first was Sister Frances Herbert, daughter of Sir Edward Herbert, second son of William, Earl of Pembroke,* who married Anne Parr, so that Sister Frances was great-niece to Queen Catherine Parr, sixth wife of Henry VIII. Lady Lucy Herbert, who became Prioress of the English Convent, Bruges, was a great-granddaughter of the first Lord Powis, brother to Sister Frances.

On November 9, 1609, came eight others, who parted from their Flemish Sisters at St Ursula's with much weeping on both sides, "for there was great love among them."

Their names were as follows: Sister Mary Wiseman, whom the elections were to place at the head of the Community; Sister Bridget Wiseman; Sister Frances Burrows, niece to the Lord Vaux; Sister Anne Bromfield; Sister Susan Laybourne, daughter to a holy Martyr, for whose sake the old Countess of Arundel (first cousin to the Martyr and wife of Ven. Philip Howard) gave £80 to help her hither; Sisters Catherine and Margaret Tremaine, sisters to Richard Tremaine, a Cornish gentleman, indicted (with Blessed Cuthbert Mayne) for aiding and abetting the martyrs in 1577, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment; the last of the eight was Sister Mary Scudamore, who had promise of her uncle, Sir Richard Farmer, of eighty nobles a year.

Only four English nuns remained at St Ursula's and died there. Sister Frances Felton, Sister Helen Garnet, Sister Anne Rookwood, and Sister Anne Clitheroe. These furthered the foundation by every means in their power; Sister Anne Clitheroe was especially zealous, and by her counsel and assistance greatly encouraged

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* It is recorded of him that on one occasion he rode to his domain of Baynard Castle with 300 mounted men in his retinue, of whom 100 were gentlemen in plain blue cloth with chains of gold and his badge—a dragon—on their sleeves. Yet his Catholic granddaughter had to rely on kindness for her maintenance in the cloister.

Sister Shirley. A sisterly intercourse was kept up between the two Convents, and when any were admitted to St Monica's, they were sent before receiving the religious habit to visit St Ursula's, where the four remaining English nuns lived happily amidst their Flemish Sisters and " died, leaving behind them in that cloister much edification of virtue and note of sanctity."

Twenty years after the foundation of St Monica's the Community had so increased in number that a colony was sent to Bruges; the places thus vacant were soon filled up, and the English House continued to flourish in the old University town for nearly two hundred years. The leading Catholic families of England sent thither their daughters to be brought up as " Christian gentlewomen," and the Community was chiefly recruited from their ranks. Then came the disastrous days of the French Revolution, and in 1794 the nuns of St Monica's sought refuge in their own country, from which their predecessors had fled in " the spacious times of great Elizabeth " to find a liberty denied them under her sway.

In 1798 St Monica's was sold; the leaden coffins, found in the vault, were broken up and sold as old metal, and the remains they contained were scattered to the winds; they were those of illustrious Catholic exiles, such as the saintly " Widow Allen," the only son of the martyred Earl of Derwentwater, and many others. In course of time the Choir and Church were pulled down, and little now remains of the peaceful abode of so many generations of religious women.*

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* St Monica's was in the street now called " Voie des Capucins." What still exists belongs to a horticulturist and gives an idea of what the cells must have been. In 1905, I noticed in the pavement of rooms on the ground-floor stones with the following inscriptions:

M
BARTLET
1689
H. BARTLET
1715

†
Sr PLACIDA
WILLOUGHBY
ETATIS 60 PRO: 40
OBIIT MART; 6
1756
R I P.

1746
SR. MARIA
ANNA WARD

(Note communicated by Père Willaert, S.J.)

On their return to England the Canonesses were, for a short time, at Amesbury in Wiltshire, and while there they received the visit of George IV; this was probably the first visit of English Royalty to a Catholic Convent in this country since the Reformation. The Community finally settled at Newton Abbot in South Devon, their home since 1861. They have given up the work of education, and have devoted themselves to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which is also carried on in a second Convent established by them at Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire, named St Monica's, in memory of the old and much-loved Monastery in Louvain.

IV

" EX MAGNA TRIBULATIONE "

Before passing on to an account of the second English Foundation, it may be well to narrate some few episodes which will make us better understand what manner of women those were who sought refuge in Louvain or Bruges, at what cost they followed the Divine call, and in what school they had been trained.

The annals of Convents, edifying as they may be, are apt to pall on the general reader. The life-story of religious women leading " a long and daily dying life " in their peaceful retreat, where " kind loves keep house, lie close and make no noise," does not lend itself to vivid description, and the reader at least would sometimes welcome a reference to the " tumultuous joys," or even to the things that " keep crowned woes awake," in the kingdoms beyond the " contentful cells " of the religious.*

Some of the many pious lives published in the last half-century give us the impression that the subject of the memoir must indeed have been a saintly woman, and that her Sisters recognised her as such, but that she had kept from them " the secret of the King," or perhaps was to some extent unconscious of it herself, for not only cockle, but also the good seed, grows " dum nescit ille " in whose field it is sown.

The result is that the biographer, anxious to convey to others the impression of sanctity received from contact with a living personality, gives us a record of actions of which the reader may be tempted to exclaim: " Do not the heathens do this ?" In writing such lives, it is necessary to lay bare the hidden springs to make us realize the love which prompted and permeated actions of no importance in themselves. Then, indeed, such records possess a surpassing interest, for they reveal to us the history of souls--of God's dealings with His creatures. This has been admirably done in our days by Blessed Teresa of the Child Jesus in her Autobiography. The Chronicler of Windesheim, too, in his utter simplicity, makes us realize the intensity of the inner life led by the white-robed Canons in their quiet old-world cloisters.

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* See Crashaw's *Description of a Religious House.*

But the lives of the young English girls, who came to join the Congregation of Windesheim in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and those of their friends and relations, are full of incidents which show in no doubtful light the devotion to God and His Church which burned in their hearts—the love of Christ which many waters strove in vain to quench. In their acts, in their words, it is ever breaking forth with irrepressible power and with that spirit of joy in sacrifice which Blessed Thomas More had admired in the Carthusians when he watched them going to their death " as cheerfully as bridegrooms to their marriage." Persecution gave latent heroism an opportunity of revealing itself.

Those who, notwithstanding the prohibitory statute,* had been sent for seven or eight years to be educated in some convent school on the Continent, would find on their return home that Mass was still celebrated there, but it was at the risk of fortune and life. In the irregularly built old manor houses, hiding-places were constructed in which the officiating priest could be concealed at a moment's notice, and even the children of the family had often to be trusted with the secret, for the houses of "recusants," as those were called who refused to attend the Protestant services, were liable to frequent visits from the pursuivants, or priest-hunters.

If a daughter of these Catholic families felt the call of God to serve Him in the cloister, the escape overseas was perilous and difficult in the extreme, for the sea-ports were watched by emissaries of the Government. So those who came to beg admittance among the Augustinian Canonesses had often gone through experiences for which no little courage was needed; they came, indeed, " out of great tribulation," and the record of what it cost them to follow their vocation is full of interest. It is a story of heroism on the part of the nuns and on that of their friends and relations, but from childhood they had been trained " to join a man's heart to a woman's thought."

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* The statute of 27 Elizabeth (March 29, 1585) enacted that none during her Majesty's life should send his child or ward beyond the sea, without special licence, under forfeiture of £100 for each offence. The statute also enacted that any of her lay subjects being educated abroad, who should not within six months after proclamation return into the realm, and two days after this return take the oath of supremacy, should be adjudged a traitor.

Thus when Frances Burrows (professed at St Ursula's in 1597) was living at Harrowden House with her cousin, Mrs. Brooksby, daughter to the Lord Vaux, the child, though but eleven years old, was always let " to go up and down to answer the officers, because her courage was such as she never seemed daunted or feared at anything"; she would herself help to hide the priests, and then go to face the pursuivants; when one of these, thinking it would be easy to terrify a little girl, caught her by the arm, holding a dagger to her breast and menacing to shed her blood if she did not disclose the hiding-place, she bade him do so if he durst, adding: "And thou shalt find it the hottest blood thou didst ever shed in thy life." The baffled pursuivant could not contain his admiration, which he expressed by saying: "It was a pity that a maid of her courage should be spoiled with papistry!" Of such a one it is touching to read in her obituary notice that she found it hard to overcome her quick temper, and that in spite of constant efforts she could not so wholly do so, but that sometimes a hasty word would escape her, for which she at once made amends " by humbly speaking her fault" (*i.e.*, acknowledging it publicly), and that this woman of strong, dauntless character was noted for her obedience to all superiors, and for her " great patience and humility."

The vocation of Frances to the Augustinian Order was determined by a strange incident. While still in England, being one day alone in the garden, thinking of being a nun, there came to her a man clad in a long white woollen robe, such as she had never seen before; he spoke to her in a tongue which she understood not, but thinking he was perhaps asking for help, she went into the house, and having procured food and drink she carried it out to him; after partaking thereof he smiled at her, and raising his hand, gave her a long blessing and so departed. Returning to the house she told what had happened, and some went out to follow him with all speed, but neither they nor any of the neighbours ever saw the strange man in his unwonted attire, and Frances wondered who and what he might be. She was sent over to the Low Countries at the age of nineteen by Father Garnet (the Jesuit Provincial and future Martyr), and on entering the church of the Canons Regular at Louvain, she beheld them wearing the very habit she had seen in England,

and she concluded that the apparition had been a means whereby God had shown her in what Order He willed her to serve Him.

Another nun professed at St Ursula's had been thrown into prison at the age of twelve. Sister Anne Clitheroe was the daughter of " the proto-martyr of her sex in England," Blessed Margaret Clitheroe, who suffered death at York in 1586, for having harboured priests in her house. When the news of her condemnation for this cause was brought her " she was much pleased, and smiling thanked the messenger."* She refused the ordinary mode of trial lest a child brought up in her house, who had already shown the priests' hiding-place to the searchers, should be induced by fear to witness against her and so offend God. When told of the terrible death reserved for those who refused to plead, she answered: " God's Will be done, and I do humbly thank Him that He thinketh me worthy to suffer any kind of death for so good a cause. Which she spake with so great joy and sweetness that some said she was mad, others that she was possessed by a smiling spirit."

The manner of her martyrdom was what was called " peine forte et dure "; she was to be stretched on a board with a sharp stone under her back, and another board being placed over her, heavy weights were to be laid thereon till she should be crushed to death. When her arms were pinioned after the sentence had been pronounced, she again " smilingly rejoiced that she was bound for Christ's sake, which did not a little enrage them against her."

The night before her death she begged for some woman to watch with her, " not that I fear death (quoth she), for that is a comfort, but the flesh is frail." The gaoler's wife sat with her, and the Martyr passed almost the entire night praying as Her Master had done in Gethsemani the night before His Passion.

In the morning she went forth from the prison barefooted and carrying on her arm the white garment "like an alb" in which she was to suffer, and so "went cheerfully to her marriage, as she called it." On her way to the place of execution she gave alms to the poor, and on arriving, prayed for the Church, the Holy Father, and Queen Elizabeth, " unto whose soul," she said, " I do wish as much joy as to my own." The sheriff told her that she died for treason, but she answered: " No, no, I die for the love of my Lord Jesus."

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* The quotations are from the life of this holy woman, dedicated to " the Virtuous and Devout Religious Sister Anne Clitheroe, of the Order of St Augustine at Louvain " (of which a copy is preserved at Newton Abbot), and from the *Life* by her confessor Father John Mush.

She was laid on the board and her arms were extended and tied to posts on either side, so that " her body made a perfect cross." Her last words were: " Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, have mercy on me." The agony lasted about a quarter of an hour; she died at nine o'clock, and she " continued in the press until three o'clock in the afternoon." It was Good Friday, which that year fell on March 25.

So she went to her Lord,

> " Dying for the Love of Jesus,
> On the day that Jesus died,"

her Passion having had strange similitudes to His own.

Her little daughter Anne had been one of her last thoughts: " She sent her hose and shoes to her eldest daughter Anne, about twelve years old, signifying that she should serve God and follow her steps of virtue. The little girl was at first committed to ward because she would not betray her mother, and there extremely used for that she would not go to Church; but when her Mother was martyred, the heretics came up to her and said, that unless she would go to church and hear a sermon, her mother would be put to death. The child, thereby thinking to save her mother's life, went to a sermon, and thus they deceived her."

Soon after, however, we hear of her being again in prison; no doubt she had discovered the wicked and cruel deception, whereby a mere child, bereft of all counsel, had been led to yield, and now that it was but a question of her own safety, she refused to continue going to the Protestant service. She was only released when about eighteen, and sent to York, in hopes that living with her father, who was a Protestant and had remarried with a wife of his own religion, the young girl would more easily be persuaded to " confer with learned and godly preachers for such reasonable time as their honours (of the Privy Council) should judge convenient." But everything in the old northern city must have recalled to her the memory of her martyred mother, who has been called the " Pearl of York," and Anne showed herself worthy of her. She refused to " conform," and after three years was either banished or managed to escape to the Continent.

We can imagine how Mother Margaret Clement must have welcomed this daughter of a martyr when she entered St Ursula's in 1596. The annals tell us that " she followed well her holy mother's virtuous steps, for she was a very good religious, and one that set herself very seriously to the way of perfection." Her zeal for the erection of the English Foundation has been mentioned. She died at St Ursula's on August 3, 1622.

The mother of the two Sisters Wiseman was condemned to the same fearful death as Ven. Margaret Clitheroe, and for the same cause--her refusal to be tried by jury lest twelve men should be intimidated into declaring her guilt against the voice of their conscience, and she chose, therefore, to endure the more painful martyrdom. She, too, exulted with joy when the manner of her death was announced to her, in terms which might make the stoutest heart quail, exclaiming: " Now, blessed be God, that I shall die with my arms a cross as my Lord Jesus," and she "cheered up her sons," who were in great sorrow. But one of them, by means of bribes, obtained that intercession should be made to Queen Elizabeth for his mother's life, and when she understood that the matter for which this noble woman was to pay so heavy a penalty was having given " a French crown " to a priest, she rebuked the judges for cruelty and said that she should not die, but she was kept in prison till the Queen's death in 1603.

The Chronicle gives an amusing story of " Widow Wiseman's " prison days: " Upon a time her friend Topcliffe passed under her window, being mounted upon a goodly horse, going to the Queen, and Mrs. Wiseman espying him, thought it would not be amiss to wash him a little with holy water, therefore took some which she had by her, and flung it upon him and his horse as he came under her window. It was a wonderful thing to see; no sooner had the holy water touched the horse, but presently it seems he could not endure his rider, for the horse began so to kick and fling that he never ceased till his master, Topcliffe, was flung to the ground, who looked up to the window and raged against Mrs. Wiseman, calling her ' old witch,' who, by her charms, had made his horse to lay him on the ground, but she, with good reason, laughed to see that holy water had given him so fine a fall."

We feel that the holy woman was not lacking in a sense of humour,* though we may not agree with the good Sister, who prefaces this story with the remark that "it was a miraculous thing!"

Mrs. Wiseman lived till 1610; her last words to her confessor breathed that spirit of joy which was so characteristic of her: "Pater, gaudeo in Deo" (Father, I rejoice in God). Of her fervour in time of prayer, we may judge by the words "our Reverend Mother" once heard from her holy mother's lips: "It seems," she said, "that if I were tied to a stake, and burned alive for God, I should not feel it, so great is the love to Him which I feel in my soul at this time."

Four of her children became religious, for besides the two canonesses, she had two sons who were Jesuits, and her eldest son, Sir William Wiseman, "is yet living," says the Chronicle, "a man more of heaven than of the world."

Of Reverend Mother Mary Wiseman we are told that "she was a woman of great spirit and great courage, resembling well her mother. . . . She had the Latin tongue perfect, and has left us many homilies and sermons of the holy Fathers translated into English. . . . She was exceedingly addicted to mortification and corporal penance . . . using much fasting and extraordinary watching, especially in time of temptation, in such wise that afterwards Our Lord poured His spirit abundantly into her, both for herself and others. Sometimes she would spend most of the night in prayer; . . . being hard and austere for herself, she was mild and favourable to others; those whom she saw to be favoured by God, she would with discretion permit to do more than the others, and also mortify them well when occasion was, with great love and tender care over them in their infirmities. Finally, she governed our convent with great wisdom and mildness. Her desire of suffering was ever very great, wherefore in her vehement pains, when others should have comforted her, she would rather comfort them . . . and would say commonly: 'Regnum coelorum vim patitur.' After she had been annoiled[*] she lay still in deep recollection, even to her end. . . . Finally, while the choir was singing *Salve Regina* after Compline, she sweetly yielded her soul to God, with great tranquillity, upon a Friday, which happened to be the month-day of our Holy Father St Augustine."[†]

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* Her bright joyous character must have been for much in the charm which in her youth drew around her so many suitors. The Chronicle tells us that she was "of an ancient family in Wales (Vaughan) but her mother of the blood royal" (Tudor). She was ever "very backward" in the matter of marriage, by reason that she was drawn through God's instinct to delight in spiritual things; and though "having no less than thirty suitors, some whereof had seven years sought her good will, yet she could not settle her love upon any, till she yielded to her uncle, who desired her much to marry Thomas Wiseman of Braddocks (or Broad Oaks), an Esquire of ancient family in Essex."

But besides the many who came to the cloister from families faithful to the old religion, there were a few who had been brought up as Protestants, but had found their way back to the one true Fold. Such a one was Sister Anne Bromfield. Her father had long lived as a "schismatic," but had been reconciled two years before his death. His widow, who was not a Catholic, "being a gentlewoman of fine behaviour," was appointed by Queen Elizabeth "Mother of the Maids of Honour," and took her daughter, then sixteen years of age, with her to the Court.

The girl gave herself completely to its pleasures, in which she took great delight. She was ambitious, "being of a high mind," says the Chronicle, and the desire to make a brilliant match took possession of her heart, so that "aiming at greater marriages than her degree, she never was enthralled in the love of any man, amidst the occasions of such a court as that was. For Almighty God, who intended to satisfy her with no less than Himself, and to bring her into a higher state than any worldly nobility, permitted not His future spouse to be defiled with earthly love." Hers was, indeed, such a soul as is described by the Saint whose Order she was one day to enter: "Restless and unquiet until it finds its rest in God." Yet for four years she strove to satisfy it with the "trifles of trifles and vanities of vanities" which had so long held Augustine back.

At a period when the Court was even gayer than usual on account of a great marriage which was to take place, Anne suddenly fell a prey to uncontrollable sadness, and the very things she had delighted in became a torment to her; "a cloud of affliction invaded her mind . . . all the pleasures of the Court were turned into sorrow . . . and her feasting into mourning," and

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[*] *cf.* "uranelcd," *Hamlet*, I. 5. 77.

[†] It was the custom to recite on the first day of the month on which the rubrics permitted it a votive office of St Augustine, a custom which was continued till the reform of the Breviary by Pius X in 1911.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

when she could manage to be alone "her tears poured forth amain."

She could not understand her own state, and knew not how to find help, when one day the thought of giving up all and becoming a nun suddenly came into her mind . . . a strange idea for one of Queen Elizabeth's Protestant maids of honour, but at that period Catholic traditions still lived among those whom fear of persecution and desire of worldly prosperity had induced to conform to the established Church, and Anne "had heard some speech in her infancy of religious houses and nuns."

Perhaps, too, the wish may have come to her while taking part in some such entertainment as that with which Elizabeth greeted one of the princes of the House of Guise. The maids of the "Virgin Queen," as she chose to be styled, were dressed to represent the ten virgins of the Gospel parable. "Some of them had their lamps burning and full of oil," says Brantome, "and some of them carried lamps which were empty, but all their lamps were silver, most exquisitely chased and wrought, and the ladies were very pretty and well behaved."*

Anne at last made up her mind to disclose her anxiety to some unnamed person, who, however, completely discouraged her idea of entering a cloister; and, indeed, even a Catholic might have thought the desire was but the result of disappointed ambition.

Mrs. Bromfield, noticing her daughter's increasing sadness, and that she often passed the night in tears, gave her a Catholic prayer-book to read . . . probably one which had belonged to her husband. But nothing availed to bring peace to Anne's troubled soul; "the Court was loathsome to her, all things disgustful, and she knew not what ailed her." Then her mother sent her to enjoy country pleasures in the house of a married sister, but she grew ever more sad, and at length begged to return to the Court, determining "by main violence to get her pleasure again in the world.

"But Our Lord now would have the mastery, and therefore coming back to the Court again, her afflictions are renewed, no contentment can enter her mind, insomuch that, looking out of the window, she thought a dog more happy than herself, because it had not trouble of mind." God's assistance came to her by means of a

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* See Miss Strickland's *Queens of England.*

Catholic gentleman, who, visiting the Court and perceiving the grief she could no longer hide, offered to introduce her to one who should be able to help her. He therefore took her to Father Gerard, S.J.,* who instructed her in the Catholic Faith and reconciled her to the Church.

Peace now at last filled her heart, but the world had no longer any attraction for her, and she told Father Gerard how she was moved to undertake the religious life, and he, seeing the marks of a true vocation, encouraged her much therein. She desired to enter among the Poor Clares, till one day, "she felt it sensibly, as it were, said in her mind that she must go to St Ursula's."

Father Gerard was seeking means to send her overseas when he was taken " and clapped in the Tower," but he left the charge of helping her to Father Garnet, his Provincial. So she came over with Sister Mary Welch, and at Brussels the Benedictine Dames would have received them gladly for their foundation, but they said " their calling was to Louvain," and there " they courageously went forward in religion." "So doth Almighty God," says the Chronicle, " prevail with His grace as to make the strictness of hard poverty of more contentment than all the delights of princes' courts, even in the age of most flourishing youth."

We are told of how the former maid of honour found " a difficulty according to nature " on one Christmas day; Sister Anne was much tired out with singing in the choir the long Matins in the night, and the solemn service in the morning, "and coming to dinner she expected that at least on such a day they should have a little better diet than ordinary, having fasted all the

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* This heroic confessor of the Faith endured the most terrible torture in the Tower. He was hanged up by the hands, sometimes twice in one day " until he was almost dead," writes Father Garnet. His wonderful escape has been told by Father Morris, S.J., in his *Life of Father John Gerard.* He came to Louvain in 1609, and was appointed Socius to the Master of Novices in the Jesuit House established there. In a letter written in 1614, he says, "At the Monastery of St Monica's, my cousin Shirley has requested my coming thither for these three or four months, to bestow an afternoon upon her and some young nuns whom she has charge of, that they may all together ask me what spiritual questions they may like best." We also hear of one of the Flemish nuns of St Ursula's asking her English Sisters to teach her their language that she might be able to confer with so holy a man, on the state of her soul, for she greatly desired this privilege.

Advent with great strictness. Seeing nothing then but a poor little piece of boiled beef, about two fingers' breadth, she felt it hard to undergo."

We can see the postulant in the cold, austere refectory, sitting at the bare table before the earthenware cup and the pewter plate on which was set her portion of Christmas fare . . . and for a moment there may have risen before her eyes the great banqueting hall full of light and warmth and perfume, the musicians in the gallery above, the tables laden with massive gold plate, the solemn bringing in of the boar's head, the peacock pie decked with the bird's own plumage, the pasties and jellies and "subtleties," the multiplicity of spices and comfits, the choice wines and the hippocras in jewelled flagons . . . and on a raised seat, under the dais, "the Queen's Majesty," gorgeous in cloth of gold and sparkling gems, served by two earls on bended knee.

And perhaps, in accordance with the kind trick memory is wont to play us, the outlines of the fierce, commanding old figure were softened in the retrospect, and Anne saw her royal mistress, not in the mood "when the thunder fell, in wondrous manner, on all alike," and she boxed the ears of her maids of honour or rated her nobles, or "was like to fling her pantofle at the head of her Master of Musick,"* but rather in those moments when, as her godson Harington says, "her smile was as sunshine that every one did choose to bask in."

But if all this flashed before Anne Bromfield's mind it was but momentary . . . another vision will have risen before her . . . that of the many Catholics, kinsmen of the nuns around her, spending that Christmas day in some dark loathsome dungeon among rats, lying on wet and filthy straw, fettered by heavy chains, their food " such as one might throw to a dog "; she thought of her own spiritual director, Father Gerard, unable to move his fingers or help himself in anything after the terrible treatment he had undergone in the torture chamber. And then perhaps the voice of the reader in the pulpit broke in upon her thoughts, telling how the Child who was born " propter nos et propter nostram salutem " had been found in the cold and poverty of a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. It was for His sake the martyrs and confessors of the Faith, lying in the English prisons, bore their sufferings, and for His sake she, too, would willingly embrace all that was hard and repugnant to nature, and so "God's grace prevailed," and Anne Bromfield was professed on the feast of the Holy Cross (May 3), 1599, with a martyr's daughter, Sister Susan Laybourne, and Sister Mary Welch.

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* The Chronicle records how in 1613 there came to the Profession of Sister Magdalen Throckmorton, John Bolt, a priest, who had been in great repute at the Court of Elizabeth for his skill in music. On his conversion he found means to "steal away" and went to live with Catholics. The Queen was so incensed at his departure that she "fell out with the master of Musick and would have flung her pantofle at him" for having allowed Mr. Bolt to depart. The story of his arrest and imprisonment is given in the Chronicle, and how it was offered him even to live at Court without any molestation for his conscience, "but he liked better to live in the court of Christ." He became a priest at St Omer's, and afterwards going to Louvain taught the young nuns music without any pay, the Convent only maintaining him in the Chaplain's house.

Her own life was to be an interior martyrdom, for during the many years she passed in religion God led her by the way of trial and desolation. For a long time she struggled against it, desiring ardently to taste the sweetness of God's presence, " but God, Who in His divine Wisdom knoweth best what is best for everyone, denied it her all the time of her life, but gave her instead a fervent will to serve Him and grace to go through her desolation of mind during the forty years that she lived therein."

All her efforts to obtain relief by conferring with learned and holy men availed nothing, " for," says the Chronicle, with true insight into God's guidance of such souls as He would have to live in naked Faith and perfect abandonment, " she sought too much the freedom of her inward troubles, and did not rather settle herself to bear all quietly and patiently, but thought it was fit to hope and expect help therein." But some years before her death " she wholly resigned herself in all to the divine Will, who pleased to lead her by such a dry and desolate way that she might be a comfort and example to others."

For this eager, troubled soul, tormented by temptations, especially against Faith, was a most strict observer of the Rule, fervent in penitential exercises, and a great lover of prayer. " Though she had no sensible comfort therein, yet of the great desire she had to enjoy God, she esteemed most of that act which is nearest Him, and had yet less delight in exterior recreation than in prayer, out of the fervour of her will, insomuch as many thought she did enjoy much devotion, seeing her so much addicted to prayer, and to spend much time therein. In her later years she commonly stayed the whole morning in the Choir, in which time she could not meditate nor yet discourse quietly with her understanding any long time, but only now and then for some short space make an aspiration of the will, which was presently dashed again with her importunate thoughts, temptations, and afflictions."

She also found much help in vocal prayer, and the Rosary is especially mentioned as a means she used to overcome temptation and "keep down the working of imagination."

Her death occurred in the April of 1638. Three years previously she had visited the convent, then lately founded, which still stands in the Rue des Carmes at Bruges. The story of that foundation must now be told; enough has been said to show what spirit and what traditions were carried thither from St Monica's . . . a spirit perpetuated in the Community even to this day, and which has helped to mould the character of the many generations who during three centuries have passed through its school.

English Convent, Bruges (The Old Cemetery)

English Convent, Bruges

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V

FOUNDATION OF THE CLOISTER OF NAZARETH

English Convent, Bruges

In the year 1629, the Cloister of St Monica's in Louvain "being overcharged with religious," the Prioress, Mother Mary Wiseman, resolved to make another foundation, and a small band was sent forth to "set up a convent at Bridges in Flanders."* The old town had been the refuge of many an English exile since the days when Gunhilda, daughter of the great Earl Godwin, had fled to Flanders after the Battle of Hastings.†

Later on it had been visited by two martyrs for the cause of the Church, whose memories must have been especially dear to the English nuns. St Thomas of Canterbury had been received there by Philip, Count of Flanders, in the November of 1170, before embarking for England, where a few weeks later he was to receive the crown of martyrdom, and Blessed Thomas More had accompanied Cardinal Wolsey to Bruges in 1521, and had assisted at Mass with him in the Church of St Jacques. But perhaps the thought that was most present to the nuns was that of their much-loved "old Mother," Margaret Clement, who had lived there when her parents first came out of England.

They must have felt that a foundation at Bruges was even more than that of Louvain "a fore-passage to England," and little could they have foreseen that the Cloister of Nazareth would become so dear to them by its hallowed memories that nearly two centuries later they alone of all the English Communities which had sought refuge on the Continent would choose freely to leave their country once more in order to return to it.

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* It was customary to spell the name thus as it was generally thought that the city took the name from the number of its bridges, the Flemish word *brugge* signifying a bridge; others think that the name comes rather from *brigga* or *brugga*, a heath (*cf.* French *bruyère*).

† She was buried in the Church of St Donatian; an engraved plate, recording her virtues, is yet to be seen in the Cathedral of Bruges.

What remains of Windesheim is now used as a Protestant Church; the people of Brussels go to picnic in the Forest of Soignes, where Blessed John Ruysbroeck and his first disciples lived and prayed, the names of St Ursula's and St Monica's are well nigh forgotten in Louvain, but the Community which took possession of the small house in the Rue des Carmes* on September 14, 1629, is still there, forming, says a recent writer, "une île britannique noyée dans la population flamande."†

The house stood "in the midst of a fair orchard" on the northern side of the city, near to the ramparts, and it justified the report of the Confessarius, Father Barnes, that though "it were but little, yet was it commodious to make a cloister of."

It already bore the sweet name of Nazareth, for in former days it had been a hospice for the harbouring of poor strangers, who were there lodged and fed for the love of God.‡ It had been bought in 1628 by the Lady Mary Lovel, widow of Sir Robert Lovel and daughter of John Roper, first Lord Teynham. She was thus great-niece to the William Roper who had married Margaret, daughter of Sir Thomas More. She had meant to set up at Bruges a convent for "English women of ye Cistercian Order, having before erected the Cloister of English Carmelites at Antwerp. But it seems God would not have this plan to go forward, for He took away the Lady Lovel just at the upshot of the business, whereby all was dashed, and she left by her Will§ the house of Bruges to the English Jesuits."

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* So called because there was in it a Church and Monastery of Carmelite Friars.

† Père Willaert, S.J.: "Le Couvent des Dames Anglaises à Bruges," published in *La femme belge*, 1915.

‡ "From the feast of All Saints till Easter Sunday the travellers are refreshed morning and evening with food and drink, and they have a fire; but on the very morning of Easter Sunday the paschal eggs are given them, and the portion ceases till the feast of All Saints" (Sanderus). At one time there was contiguous to this hospice a house for lepers, dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, which is said to have been established at the foundation of the town (*i.e.*, seventh century), but its site was changed several times.

§ Lady Lovel died at Bruges in November, 1628, and was buried in the Church of Notre Dame. Her will, a curious document, has been published by Père Willaert. To her sister Elizabeth, wife of Lord Vaux of Harrowden, she leaves "2 silver picturs," to "my neece of Aburgany [Catherine, wife of Henry Neville, seventh Lord

It was from Father Edward Bedingfield, S.J. (alias Silisdon), Rector of the Jesuits at Ghent, that Reverend Mother Wiseman bought the house for £340 sterling. The following stipulation with regard to the purchase money appears in Lady Lovel's Will: "I give this house toe our Ingleesh seciety at Gant, to make them a coleg if thay may procure it . . . and if it soe come to pass that thay cannot procure to inhabit it, but must sell it, I doe ordaine the muny to be imployed upon a rent for won Father to wright against heretiks."

The Community of St Monica's had settled to allow the ten nuns, who were destined for the Bruges foundation, £10 a year each, but "when they came to get the town's good will and licence of the Bishop there,* it was thought too little in respect of the dear time," and it was agreed that £15 should be given yearly for the maintenance of each member of the Community, lest it might become burdensome to the town. The licence of the Infanta Isabella was also obtained.

The names of the first five foundresses are given as follows in the Chronicle: Sister Frances Standford, who was destined for Prioress "because she was wise and discreet, peaceful and beloved"; for Subprioress was appointed Sister Anne Tremaine, "one of our old sisters that came from St Ursula's in the later company";† Sister Mary Best, "who had well the Dutch language, and was handsome in exterior things," wherefore she was to fill the office of Procuratrix; Sister Mary Altham, who was "Mistress of the Scholars" at St Monica's and was to be Mistress of Novices at Bruges; and Sister Elizabeth Lovel, "who had the Dutch language, and having a good voice was made their chantress." With them was a lay-Sister, but she went only to help to "dress the house," and returned afterwards to

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Abergavenny] a ring from my finger of St Joseph to were for my sake; to Magdulin Jonson a nue goune and a cloke; to Mary Jenks a goune of tany carsey; to the carmelits in this strete a vaile of purple taffety wraught all with silver; to oure Inglesh carmelits 200 florins rent. and a lamn of gret perll under the claus of a lion and a tigor." No mention is made of her niece, Sister Mary Lovel, who was to be one of the first to inhabit the Convent founded in the house in which her aunt died.

* Dionysius Christopher, sixth Bishop of Bruges, which had been erected into a diocese by Pius IV in 1560.

† In the obituary notice of this our first Subprioress we read that she was "humble in her conversation and a great lover of peace." Her father, Sampson Tremayne of St Ewe, Cornwall, was during thirty years a prisoner for the Faith.

St. Monica's; there went also to Bruges "one scholar from hence, named Ursula Palmes, grandchild to the Lady Babthorpe."

All these left Louvain on the morning of September 11, bidding farewell immediately after Mass " with weeping on both sides as must necessarily be at the parting of sisters." There went with them as guide on their journey "a religious man, of our Order, ye Reverend Father Paris, a Canon Regular of Groenendael, afterwards Prior of the same,* who used daily to say Mass in our convent, and also a worldly† English gentleman, Mr. Fairfax."

The party travelled by coach, passing through Brussels and Alost, and at Ghent they tarried one whole day, and were most kindly entertained by the English Benedictine Dames established there; it is pleasant to note throughout the annals the sisterly spirit which reigned between our Canonesses and the various English Communities in the Low Countries; we find them ever ready to help one another in all difficulties.

From Ghent the journey was made by barge; old ways live long in Flanders, and the poet Southey, in his " Pilgrimage to Waterloo," might be describing the journey of the nuns two centuries earlier:

" Embarking then, we glided on between
Strait banks raised high above the level land,
With many a cheerful dwelling white and green
In goodly neighbourhood on either hand.
Huge timber'd bridges o'er the passage lay,
Which wheeled aside, and gave us easy way.

Three horses, aided by the favouring breeze,
Drew our gay vessel, slow and sleek and large.
Crack goes the whip; the steersman at his ease
Directs the way, and steady went the barge;
Ere evening closed, to Bruges thus we came,
Fair city worthy of her ancient fame."

The arrival at Bruges was on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14), which is reckoned the feast of the foundation of the house, and is kept even now as a day of special silence and prayer.

The nuns "dedicated the Cloister to the Blessed Virgin, calling it Her house of Nazareth, because the foundation was begun within the Octave of Her Nativity." They were apparently ignorant of the fact that it had been so called formerly; it seems as if Our Lady would not give up her title to a place hallowed since so long by works of mercy. It was now to be consecrated to her in a more special manner, and to become a house in which charity should ever reign supreme according to the words which give the keynote to the Augustinian Rule: " In omnibus supereminent caritas."

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* Later on Superior General of the whole Congregation of Windesheim.

† The word " worldly " meant " secular " in the nuns' vocabulary.

The elections, which were held a few days after the arrival, confirmed the choice made for the various offices by Reverend Mother Mary Wiseman. Dr. Edward Weston, then Canon of Notre Dame, was appointed to hear the confessions of the nuns till a resident confessor could be obtained, and a month later five more Sisters were sent from Louvain; these were of " the younger sort, and of those who had most kindred at St Monica's."

Thus there came Sisters Barbara and Lidwin Clapton, who were the two middlemost of four Sisters professed together; Sister Grace Constable, granddaughter to the Lady Babthorpe, who had brought her with her to the cloister; Sister Mary Gifford, niece to Sister Anne Gifford, and Sister Elizabeth Lucy Brereton.

These first Sisters cheerfully underwent the hardships of a foundation made in poverty; the house was so small that there were but two rooms on the ground floor, of which the best was chosen for the chapel and the other served for refectory and work-chamber, and the rooms above were divided by curtains into the necessary number of cells, one room being left free to serve as an infirmary; it was but too soon required for this purpose, for before long " it pleased God to visit us with much sickness which was a hard trial by reason of the great inconvenience and poverty of the house."

In 1634 the plague broke out, " the town being much infected with it." In the September of that year the Lady Babthorpe, having brought to the school her little daughter Ursula, she herself was lodged in the chaplain's house and there fell ill, two lay-Sisters being sent out to tend her. The Lady died without the nature of her malady having been suspected, but after her death the lay-Sisters went out once more to cleanse the room and both " were struck by the infection." This gave occasion to a generous act on the part of Sister Elizabeth Lovel, the youngest of the five foundresses. Her vocation was one of those so common in fiction, so rare in real life—a vocation following on a disappointment in love.

Elizabeth Lovel* "had come out of England with her grandmother, the Lady Cross, and, being in these countries, was courted by an English gentleman of quality, and the match was so far concluded that the wedding gown was made." For some unknown reason the marriage was broken off and "the young gentlewoman was so deeply affected thereby that she resolved to go to a cloister."

All who have experience in the matter of vocations know that it is those to whom the world has seemed to offer an overbrimming cup of happiness, who in religion "carry a burden which is no burden," find all that is bitter, sweet and delightful, and "run, fly, and rejoice" in the Way of the Cross. To them the saying: "Deny thyself, take up thy Cross and follow Jesus" does not seem "a hard saying," for they have a sense of His perfect sufficiency, "Who alone is especially loved amongst all that are dear to them."† But for those who turn in disappointment from the world there is usually a greater effort required to accept the life of continual sacrifice, of "perfect abnegation of themselves,"‡ which vocation to the cloister demands.

Sister Elizabeth Lovel had a sharp struggle, and her noviceship had been prolonged by six months, but God had in store for her a special grace; she was to give that supreme proof of love than which He has declared there is none greater—that of laying down her life for others. She "extremely importuned" the Prioress that she might be the one to tend the two lay-Sisters, and within a few days she died a victim to her charity, while they both recovered. The Chronicle records that Sister Elizabeth was buried in the night in St Anne's Church, and that in six weeks the house was free from infection.

Reverend Mother Standford died early in the following year. She had accepted the Office of Prioress "against her will and mind, for she loved rather to obey than to command," but she had borne her Cross bravely and had shown herself a true Mother to all. "Her trials were many and her patience great, having had both the afflictions of War and Plague, and we may say, in some sort of Famine also through the extreme poverty of the house." The allusion to war refers to the year 1631, when "the town of Bridges was in great danger to be taken by the Hollanders, but God by His sweet Providence preserved us and freed the town after we had been for some days very much frightened."*

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* The Lovels had settled in Norfolk in the twelfth century, when Sir Thomas Lovel, who had accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion to the Crusade, married the heiress of Barton Bendish in that county.

† *Imit.*, Book III, chaps. v and viii.

‡ Constitutions, chap. xix, "Of the Professed Nuns."

Reverend Mother Standford left the Convent charged with a debt of nearly £500 sterling, which was a great sorrow to her, but "in all the time of her government she had no assistance from any of her friends." The alms from England were usually most generous, but it sometimes happened that what had been promised could not be paid on account of the heavy fines inflicted on recusants,† and sometimes, it must be confessed, for other reasons, as in the case of Mother Standford's nephew, Colonel Standford. In the time of his father, the family seat, Perry Hall in Staffordshire, had been the resort of hunted priests who were there harboured, but when Colonel Standford became its master in the reign of Charles I. it was the scene of such gaiety as we associate with the name of Cavalier.

The Colonel is described as "one of the leading *beaus* of the time," and he kept an open house. A story is told of how his brother-in-law, Sir John Southcote, rode over one day when the royal army was stationed near and, " finding the doors open, rode on horseback into the hall, and seeing lights up the stairs, which were broad and of easy ascent, rode up the stairs too, and never alighted from his horse till he came close to the table where they were sitting at supper, who were much pleased with his frolic and glad to see him."

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* Though it was part of the Dutch army which appeared before Bruges, it was under the command of the Duke of Vendôme. The town was defended by the Civic Guard, under the Governor, Count de Fontaine, who fell at Rocroy in 1643. To the summons to surrender was sent a rhymed answer, alluding to the French and Dutch alliance in the following terms:

"Ni le *lys*, ni *l'oranger*
N'ont la force de changer
Aux Brugeois leur premier estre
Et quitter leur prince et maistre."

Bruges is declared to be "une bonne ville . . . perle et fleur des Pays-Bas . . . mais *l'oranger* n'y croist pas."

Vendôme, seeing the ramparts well manned and furnished with artillery, raised the siege after a few days. (See *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, by Wilfrid Robinson.)

† Thus Lord Vaux of Harrowden wrote to Lord Burghley calling himself "the unfortunatest peer of Parliament for poverty that ever was," and saying: "My Parliament robes are at pawn to a citizen." (Ellis' Original Letters, third series, vol. iv, p. 109.) See *Life of Father Gerard*, by Father Morris, S.J. He gives an interesting account of Elizabeth Vaux (aunt of Sister Elizabeth Lovel), and of the heroism with which she refused to furnish information regarding Father Gerard; when one of the lords who were examining her said: "Have pity on yourself and on your children and say what is required of you, for otherwise you must certainly die," her only answer was: "Then, my Lord, I will die." She was, said one of the lords of the Council, "a stout papist, going ahead of others, and, as it were, a leader in evil."

But in the account book of the Convent we find the counterpart to the jovial hospitality of the young squire of Perry Hall; for thirteen consecutive years the following entry occurs: " The rent of £20 due from Mr. Standford, this year nothing," and at length the nuns compounded with him, accepting £150 instead of £260, " as no more could be gotten."

On the death of Mother Standford the nuns of Bruges wrote to Louvain to beg that Sister Mary Pole* should be sent to fill the Office of Prioress. Great difficulties were raised, the nuns of St Monica's not being willing to give her up, and she herself being reluctant to accept the charge; she insisted that at least she should be allowed to take with her Sister Augustina Bedingfield, her kinswoman, on whose help she felt she could rely, but at length it was settled that Mother Pole should alone go to Bruges, where she arrived in the May of 1635; she had passed through Antwerp and had been received and entertained there in the kindest manner " by the English Teresians who loved our house much."

Under the wise government of the new Prioress the struggling Community at Bruges was soon raised to a flourishing condition, its debts were paid, and it " increased with the receipt of many gentlewomen that came out of England unto them."

The following account of her parentage is given in the Chronicle of St Monica's, where she was professed in 1622, and is too interesting to be omitted:

" Sister Mary Pole was daughter to Geoffrey Pole of the blood royal, for his father was brother to Cardinal Pole of happy memory, and son of the worthy Countess of Salisbury, Margaret Plantagenet, daughter unto the Duke of Clarence, brother to King Edward IV;† the which Countess was married to Sir Richard Pole, Knight of the Garter,* by whom she had Cardinal Pole, who stoutly withstood Henry VIII in his wicked doings when he broke off with the See Apostolic. Wherefore the said King made it high treason to assist Cardinal Pole, who was living then at Rome, and at length, having a mind to make away his mother, they suborned accusations against her that she had relieved her son; so that she was condemned to be beheaded, as also her two sons, the eldest being Lord Montague, and the other named Sir Geoffrey Pole.

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* " Pool " in the MS., and, in like manner, " Rome " is spelt " Room," showing the pronunciation of the time.

† Her brother, the unfortunate Edward, Earl of Warwick, was beheaded in 1499 on a charge of treason, the real reason being the fact of his inheriting the Yorkist claim to the throne.

"This noble Countess was thus by most treacherous dealing brought to her end, without any trial or hearing of her defence, for wicked Cromwell had gotten it ordained that such as were convicted of treason should not be admitted to their answer, and himself by the great judgement of God fell into the snare which he had made for others, and became the second or third that was put to death in the same manner.

"When, therefore, the said Countess saw that she must die for so just and innocent a cause, she spoke thus of King Henry the Eighth: 'Have I,' said she, 'put my hand upon his head to make him a Christian (for she was his godmother in baptism), and will he now in recompense cut off my head?' Thus was this noble lady beheaded in defence of justice at the age of sixty-six years, having been a widow from the age of twenty-five, which showed well her great virtue, and deserved to be styled among the number of martyrs.

"Her son, Sir Geoffrey Pole, being also condemned, took such extreme grief at the wicked and malicious proceedings against his mother and himself that he fell extreme sick, and was come even to the point of death before the executioner bereaved him of life. Whereupon his lady, being a devout and good woman, took the heart to go to the King and beg his life in this distressed case, hoping as it would seem, that if she could obtain his life of an earthly Prince, she might perhaps obtain it from the King of Heaven. Upon this her request they told the King that His Majesty might well grant her this for her comfort, in respect that her husband was already as good as dead. She then, having obtained her petition, caused presently five Masses to be said in honour of Our Saviour's Five Wounds unto which she was very devout; and behold Almighty God heard her prayers, for as the fifth was saying he began to mend, and soon after recovered.* But notwithstanding his estate was all confiscated to the King, so that he had no more left than what was his wife's, who was an heiress, daughter to Sir Edward Packenham, who was descended from the Kings of Ireland. By him she had many children, but of all the sons none had issue except her son Geoffrey Pole, father to our sister, of whom to speak now.

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* Sir Richard Pole's mother was half-sister to Margaret Beaufort, Henry VII's mother.

"He was a brave gentleman and courageous, a most constant Catholic, a harbourer of priests, and one who, being strong of hand, would beat the pursuivants and catch-polls so handsomely that they stood in great fear of him. Insomuch that once a pursuivant, being sent down to serve a writ upon him for his conscience, he chanced to meet the pursuivant upon the way, so that riding together the fellow began to speak of Mr. Geoffrey Pole, saying thus: 'He is a shrewd man of his hands, for he did beat a brother of mine, but I have here something, I warrant, that will cool his courage,' and told him how he had brought a writ for him. He heard him and said nothing who he was, but entertained him with talk, and rode on together so long till he had him in a fit place, and then said to him: 'Here is Geoffrey Pole, what hast thou to say to him?' The fellow pulled out his writ, and said as the manner is, 'The Queen greets you' (for it was in her reign). He, hearing this, made no more ado, but drew out his sword, and said: 'Look here, fellow, I give thee thy choice; either eat up this writ, or else eat my sword; for one of both thou shalt do ere we part hence.' The poor knave began to quake for fear and durst not resist him, but, like a coward, was wholly daunted, and did indeed eat up the writ for mere fear, rather than he would be killed. So became the writ of no effect, but only to punish the pursuivant for his pains.

"Having an aunt of his married to an heretical bishop, he would play them such merry tricks in contempt of that false dignity, as when he chanced to ride by their house he would blow a horn and shoot off a pistol, for to make them a mock. Such like good feats did this worthy gentleman perform, and showed always his zeal unto the Catholic religion; but at last the parsons made the country too hot for him, for he did often confute and deride them; and so he went over the seas into voluntary banishment, where he died, a constant Catholic, at Antwerp.

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* There is no hint in this account, furnished by Geoffrey's granddaughter, of the accusation brought against him of having saved his life by betraying his brother Lord Montague. The matter is discussed by Dom Adam Hamilton, and he refers to the testimony of the "Spaniard Garcias, who was in England at the time," who tells of Sir Geoffrey's deep grief and bitter self-reproach when he found he had been entrapped into injuring his brother by an admission that the latter had sought absolution at Rome for taking the oath of supremacy.

"This his daughter, Mary, Almighty God chose for Himself, for, having a mind to be a religious, she came out of England into France, at the time when some English gentlewomen were about to set up a monastery there of St. Benedict's Order, intending to be with them, but that design of the monastery's erection taking no effect, she lived with her brother at Paris, who, loving her dearly, made her to keep house with him. So they lived there seven years until her brother, going to Rome, she returned into England."

The Bruges Chronicle tells us that she entered a Monastery of the Order of St Teresa in France, though much against her brother's will, and "she did not persevere in that holy Order, being hindered by sickness, and God having designed her for His service in another." After again returning to England, she was recommended to St Monica's, and was there professed with three others, one of whom was Sister Augustina Bedingfield, her kinswoman.

It is amusing to see with what evident relish the nun-chronicler records the somewhat boyish doings of Geoffrey Pole, and to note her fine contempt for the coward knave who yielded to him out of "mere fear"; but these daughters of England in the seventeenth century had their full share of that frank joyousness which, before Puritanism cast a gloom over the land, was such an essentially English characteristic. They had been brought up, too, in stirring times, and as we read the brief notices of their lives, we feel that many of them could have played the part of Blanche Arundel or of the famous Countess of Derby.* But they had chosen another part, to follow Christ the King in His poverty and humility, and they were as whole-hearted in that service as their fathers and brothers in the cause of loyalty. Of Mary Pole the annals tell us that "though she had lived so long in the world in great liberty, as mistress of her brother's house," she was from the first noted for her spirit of obedience and humility.

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* Lady Blanche Arundel held Wardour Castle for nine days against the Parliamentarians, and Charlotte de la Trémouille, wife of the seventh Earl of Derby, defended Latham House against 2,000 rebels who besieged it in 1644.

Nevertheless, with the Plantagenet blood which flowed in her veins, Mother Pole seems to have inherited as strong a will as any member of that royal dynasty, and she showed it by the determination with which she pursued her resolve to obtain Sister Augustina Bedingfield for the Bruges House. Though she had yielded at the time of her election, "she ever retained in her mind an earnest desire to have her here"; she wrote letters to Mother Magdalen Throckmorton, Prioress of St Monica's, who was loth to give up a religious of so much promise and so greatly loved by her Sisters there. The nuns at Bruges "well perceived they would not easily obtain her," but Mother Pole, nothing daunted, "employed friends and continued to write letters, but nothing prevailed, wherefore she wrote to the most illustrious Lord Bishop of Mechlin unto which obedience that cloister of St Monica's is subject, humbly representing to His Lordship how both herself and her convent here that requested this favour were also his children. This so moved the Archbishop that he was very much inclined to favour her suit. . . . We required no maintenance with her which pleased him the better."

The Archbishop sent the archpriest to take the votes of the nuns of St Monica's on the subject; their consent was not given, but Mother Pole "constantly persevering in her desire, and often urging and importuning the Archbishop," he at length sent the archpriest a second time, and it was finally agreed that Sister Augustina should go to Bruges, the Prioress and Convent of St Monica's retaining power to recall her should her presence be found necessary for the good of that house. But she lived and died at Nazareth, of which she became one of the most holy and capable superiors.

A few weeks after the installation of Mother Pole as Prioress of Bruges, Louvain was menaced by the French and Dutch troops, who had taken Tirlemont, and had there "used such violence and abomination for the space of three days" that when their approach was announced to the people of Louvain, "almost all the worldly women of the town fled." Reverend Mother Magdalen Throckmorton gave her Community the choice of remaining till the enemy were nearer or of at once seeking safety elsewhere, and about half the nuns left for Bruges. Thirty-five persons set out from St Monica's in waggons in the morning of St Anthony of Padua's day (June 13).

The Chronicle tells of the kindness of the Monasteries in the towns through which they passed. At Brussels all were to go to the Benedictine Dames, but the Countess of Berlaymont, who had founded a Convent of Canonesses hard by their Monastery, " stood ready," and, as the waggons lumbered up the street, she " called out of the window to stay them at her house," so that twenty-five went there and the rest to St Benedict's.* At Ghent and Alost the Benedictines also gave them hospitality.

The band of fugitives arrived at the Cloister of Nazareth at nine o'clock at night, and were lovingly received by their Sisters, though all hearts were heavy to see them in such distress. Sister Anne Bromfield had been appointed to act as Superior during their stay at Bruges, where they remained till the end of August,† but a house had to be found for them, as the little foundation in the Rue des Carmes was too small to accommodate so many for more than a few days.

The good people of Bruges showed their wonted charity. " It was a wonderful thing to see their kindness," says the Chronicle; the townsfolk and the religious Communities sent them alms of food and money, and provided them with bedding, etc. The Bishop granted them leave to enter the enclosure of their Sisters of Nazareth freely, and we can imagine the joy of these meetings, for many of the nuns had passed their noviceship together, or were bound by ties of close kinship.

There had come with them to Bruges Agatha Brooke (daughter to Sir Basil Brooke), who had been a " convictress "* in the school of St Monica's, and who now begged to be admitted to the Cloister of Nazareth as "a scholar" for the Order, and so passed under the care of Sister Mary Altham, who was now Novice-Mistress.

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* It is pleasant to record, with grateful memory, that during the recent war the Canonesses of Bruges received a kind offer of hospitality from those of Berlaymont, should they be forced to leave their Convent.

† They reached Louvain on August 23, having first gone to Antwerp, where " the Reverend Mother of the English Teresians desired very much they might come that way. They did so and were exceeding much made of by the good religious and kind Mother, insomuch that she made them great cheer, and showed them all the kindness she could. It seemed to her she never did enough. She kept them some days, it being impossible to get away, for between that monastery and ours had always been good correspondence."

Sister Mary Altham had been "designed for our monastery by Mr. Cooper, a worthy priest then prisoner in Newgate"; she had come overseas with another gentlewoman, who "was weary of the world," for it greatly afflicted her "to see that oftentimes men were like to kill one another about her, for if she showed favour to one, as esteeming some virtue that was in him, another was mad with jealousy thereat." This was Mary Windsor, "daughter to Mr. Andrew Windsor, son of the late Lord Windsor and of Lady Catherine Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford."

She came over uncertain what Order to enter, and both the "Jesuitesses"† and Benedictines were ready to receive her. She thought but to accompany Mary Altham to the Convent of her choice, and then to return to Brussels, but arriving at Louvain on the eve of St Augustine's Feast, and hearing her companion speak with youthful enthusiasm of her longing to be "among those angels," and "understanding that we went in white," she began to conceive a liking for the Order, and when both were together at the grate, "she felt herself moved to kneel down and beg the place with the other." She was admitted, and the two friends were professed together in 1616.

In the obituary notice of Sister Mary Altham she is spoken of as a person of eminent virtue, a strict observer of the holy Rule, and even the least customs, and sweetly alluring the young ones to the like.

It would be too long to give an account of each of the foundresses or of their family histories, yet before concluding this chapter a few details must be recorded which may be of interest.

Sister Mary Best had died within eighteen months after the Foundation; she was of a weak constitution, and proved unable to bear the hardships of those early days. There is a collection of quaint rhymes, written by way of recreation, in which her Sisters thus refer to her:

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* This name of not very pleasing sound is that given in the seventeenth century to the children brought up in the convent school. (*Convictor* – one who takes meals with another, boarder.)

In the more "genteel" eighteenth century they become "Ye young Gentlewomen Pensioners."

† The nuns of the Institute founded by Mary Ward were so called till they took later on the official title of "Institute of Mary." They are popularly known in England as the "Loreto Nuns."

> "Her very name her merits doth attest,
> By grace called *Mary* and by nature *Best;*
> So edifying were her actions here
> That still her name doth in her works appear."

Sister Mary Gifford was the last of the foundresses to die, surviving till the year 1675. She was daughter of Peter Gifford of Chillington in Staffordshire. Seven of the family entered among the Canonesses of St Augustine—all descendants of John Gifford, whom Queen Elizabeth visited shortly after the magnificent reception given her by the Earl of Leicester, of which Sir Walter Scott has given so brilliant a picture in the pages of *Kenilworth*. The Queen, coming then to Mr. Gifford's manor of Chillington, was there courteously entertained by him, though he had to sleep out of his own house in order to make room for her retinue. She "used him kindly and called him her 'Gentle Gifford,'" but she had not gone four miles from Chillington when she sent to arrest him as a Catholic and he was thrown into prison. Peter Gifford was an ardent royalist, and his son Charles, Sister Mary's brother, was one of those who helped Charles II to a place of safety after the Battle of Worcester.

The Sisters Clapton belonged to a well-known Warwickshire family. Their brother, Father Cuthbert Clapton, S.J., was arrested and condemned to death for his Faith in 1641, and was only saved by the influence of the Venetian Ambassador. There is in the Bruges Cloister a painting of the four sisters who became Canonesses, in which they are seen kneeling before the Holy Family, to whom St Augustine is presenting them.

Of Sister Lucy Brereton there is scant record, beyond the fact that she was one of those faithful souls who in the early days of a foundation are needed to establish the traditions of the Order on a deep and strong basis.

But of Sister Grace Constable a fuller account must be given, and, indeed, it is fitting to close this chapter with the story of one of the last nuns whose near kinsfolk confessed the Faith in the Elizabethan persecution. She was daughter of John Constable of Carethorpe,* and one of the three granddaughters brought out of England by the Lady Babthorpe, who, all following her example, were professed among the Canonesses. The story of Lady Babthorpe, told at some length in the Chronicle of St Monica's, is full of interest.

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* The family was descended from the De Lacys, Constables of Chester in the twelfth century. In 1537 Sir Robert Constable, one of the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace, suffered death for his part

She had been married at fifteen to Sir Ralph Babthorpe, "as commonly heirs are married young"; her husband yielded to go to Church for some years "as little as might be," but she remained absolutely constant, and when Queen Elizabeth's cousin, Lord Huntingdon, became President of York, she was taken before him and he examined her apart, asking her "when she had gone to Church, to which she answered 'Never,' he then demanded how many Masses she had heard: she said so many that she could not reckon them. At this he began to stamp." She was committed to prison in Sheriff Hutton Castle (under the charge of "a most hot Puritan") with five other ladies, among whom was Lady Constable of Holderness.* They were locked up separately, but "the keeper, having espied how the Lady Constable and the Lady Babthorpe were gotten together, he was in a fury with them both, and said he was bound for £400 that they should not speak with one another. But our courageous woman replied to him that he was very simple to bind himself in such a manner, 'for,' said she, 'a man hath enough to do to keep one woman, and would you undertake to keep and rule six women?'"

Indeed, her woman's wit stood her in good stead, for she managed to cut away the freestone of the window on the inside, in which the bars were fixed, and to cover all up so that nothing could be perceived, and so let in a priest to confess and communicate herself and the Lady Constable; she could have got away thus but thought it useless, as she knew she would be taken again.

When the other ladies were released "our courageous woman" was still detained, "because of her great zeal and for that she would not permit a little daughter of hers who lived with her in prison to go unto their services and prayers." At last her husband obtained her

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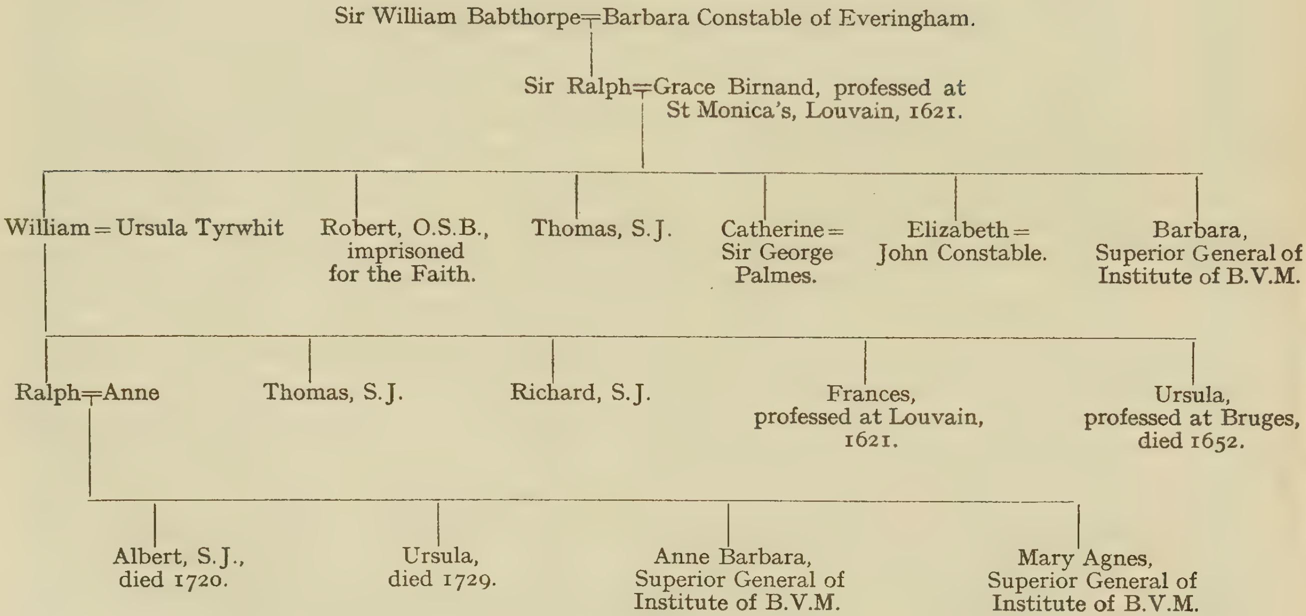
in it. He was succeeded by his brother, Sir Marmaduke of Everingham, whose granddaughter, Barbara, married Sir William Babthorpe. The connection between the families of Constable and Babthorpe, both of which have given so many members to our Order, may be seen in the table.

* Grandmother of another nun, Sister Dorothy Lawson.

BABTHORPE OF BABTHORPE PEDIGREE.


Sir William Babthorpe╤Barbara Constable of Everingham.
Sir Ralph╤Grace Birnand, professed at St Monica's, Louvain, 1621.
William = Ursula Tyrwhit
Robert, O.S.B., imprisoned for the Faith.
Thomas, S.J.
Catherine = Sir George Palmes.
Elizabeth = John Constable.
Barbara, Superior General of Institute of B.V.M.
Ralph╤Anne
Thomas, S.J.
Richard, S.J.
Frances, professed at Louvain, 1621.
Ursula, professed at Bruges, died 1652.
Albert, S.J., died 1720.
Ursula, died 1729.
Anne Barbara, Superior General of Institute of B.V.M.
Mary Agnes, Superior General of Institute of B.V.M.

freedom, and she induced him to give up his weak compliance and become a faithful Catholic. He suffered much for his conscience, and at length came overseas in King James's days, and died most holily in 1617.

His widow, who was now about fifty, resolving to give herself wholly to God, entered the Cloister of St Monica's with her grandchild, Grace Constable, "taking Him for her Spouse, whom she had desired so long before and was to her now 'Electus ex millibus,' chosen out most wisely above thousands."

She was professed in 1621 with another of her granddaughters, Frances Babthorpe, who was only seventeen, "so that," says the Chronicle, "senes cum junioribus, young and old together, we do praise Our Lord." At the touching ceremony which the English exiles flocked to witness, the preacher was Father Ralph Babthorpe, one of Lady Babthorpe's two Jesuit sons. Sister Grace was as remarkable in religion for humility and obedience as she had been in the world for constancy and courage. She wrote some of her "Recollections," and the MS. (published by Father Morris in his *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, First Series) is among the Douay Papers in the Westminster Archives.

Sister Frances was the daughter of Sir William Babthorpe, son of this holy woman, who, when the pursuivants would have carried off two priests who had been found in his house, "made no more ado, but drew out his sword, and made the priests to depart away, keeping the pursuivants the while in such fear with his naked sword that none of them durst resist him," for which exploit he was made to pay a great fine and was imprisoned for a year, after which he came overseas in such poverty that for a time he served as a common soldier, but afterwards obtained a Captaincy.

As we have seen, two of Lady Babthorpe's granddaughters were sent to Bruges in 1629. Sister Grace Constable, one of the foundresses, was a religious of great virtue, and seems to have possessed a singularly sweet nature, which won the love of all. Her sisters in religion showed the esteem in which they held her by electing her Prioress at the death of Reverend Mother Standford, but the Visitor objected that she "was much too young," for she was but twenty-eight, and Mother Pole was then sent for from Louvain.

Sister Grace became Procuratrix, an office she held from 1633 to 1642. Her " Reckonings," as the accounts were called, are the first we possess, and are written in a clear, elegant hand. To her, as to the nun of Grace Dieu Abbey, whose accounts have been published by Cardinal Gasquet, "double entry and such-like mysteries would probably have seemed a useless expenditure of time and nerve-power," and her system is as simple as that of a fifteenth-century nun.

She enters the receipts, stating from what source they are due, and then the expenses, and after the sum total, or " Summa Summarum," as it was termed, we find, written in another hand, probably that of the Prioress, " The expenditure agreeth with the receipt," or, when more prosperous days had dawned, " The receipt surmounteth the expenditure."

The expenses are noted under such headings as " Provisions for ye Kitchen,—ye Vestry,—ye Custry,—ye Sick-House," and the latter includes such items as " Wyne and meede for ye sicke and weake " and occasional small outlays for " oranges and bisquets." For the farmyard we find an annual entry " meate for ye cowes, pigges and hennes "; a cow cost 42 florins, but prices varied greatly, probably owing to the vicissitudes of the Thirty Years' War; thus the first " hogg " the nuns bought cost 42 florins, but its successors were purchased for six, four, or even two.

The Procuratrix likewise kept the wardrobe accounts of " ye convictresses," for whom she paid 62 florins to " ye Taylor, for clothes, lace, and other things about them."

The list of alms is especially interesting, for almost every Catholic name finds there a grateful record, together with those of the local authorities, who, in their generous hospitality, vied with the English in befriending the exiled English nuns. We find also the names of illustrious visitors to the town, such as " His Highness Leopoldus our Archduke " (brother to the Emperor Ferdinand II), the Duke of Lorraine (Charles IV), and in 1652 " His Highness the Duke of Gloster." But the more frequent records are those of alms from " The most illustrious Archbishop of Mechlin, the Lord Bishops of Bridges and Ghent, the Pope's Nuncio, My Lord Abbot of our Order, His Excellency our Governor, the Burgomaster and ' My Lord Commander.' " Among the English names are those of " My Lady Duchess of Buckingham," Lady Blanche Arundel, Sir George

Winter,* Sir Toby Matthew, "who gave 144 florins for a clock," the Earl of Shrewsbury, and many humbler givers who share in the prayers still enjoined at Chapter "for all our Benefactors living and dead," and whose names are read out in the Refectory as their anniversaries come round, that our meed of gratitude may never be neglected.

Sister Grace Constable also fulfilled the offices of Novice-Mistress and Arcaria,† but the last eighteen years of her life were spent as Subprioress. She died in 1673 "amid the prayers and tears of the whole community, leaving a memory of singular edification." Descendants of the Constable family have continued to enter among the Canonesses even to this day,‡ but the old line of Babthorpe is extinct.

In 1719 we read in the Annals:

"On the Feast of All Saints our dear Sister Ursula Babthorpe departed this life. She was born in these countries, but her parents were English, of very ancient families (her mother was a Hamilton), though by misfortune reduced to such low circumstances that they had not sufficiency to maintain and settle their children, nevertheless God's special Providence provided for each of them the most honourable and happy settlement in the state of holy religion, and there is now none of the family left but one of the brothers, who is an ancient Father of the Society of Jesus,§ and a sister who is supreme Superior of an Order in Germany, called 'l'Institut de Ste Marie.'"

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* Nephew to Sister Mary Winter, professed at St Monica's in 1617. Her father, Robert Winter, and his two brothers, were executed for their share in the Gunpowder Plot. A short time before her death she must have welcomed as Sister in religion Frances Parker, daughter to Lord Monteagle, by whose warning to James I the Plot was divulged. He had married a Catholic lady, sister to Francis Tresham, one of the conspirators, from whom he is popularly supposed to have received notice of the impending danger, but he seems to have been himself implicated in the Plot, which he betrayed. Though he became a Protestant he allowed his wife to bring up her children in her own Faith, and when his daughter Frances grew up "he gave his consent that she should enter religion in respect that she was crooked and therefore not so fit for the world, offering a dowry of £1,000." The Chronicler remarks that her infirmity thus gained for her "greater good and more honourable fortune than the noblest and richest marriage could have afforded her."

† The nun who has charge of the Archives. The chest, or coffer, in which important papers are kept is still called "the Ark."

‡ Two daughters of Mr. Constable Maxwell, who in 1855 became Lord Herries of Terregles, entered the Convent at Newton Abbot; one of them was sent to St Monica's, Hoddesdon, when that Convent was founded in 1886.

§ Father Albert Babthorpe, last male survivor of the Babthorpe family, and twentieth descendant from its first-known member, Ausbord or Osbert de Babthorpe, died in 1720.

"Sister Ursula had been brought up in the Bruges School, to which she was admitted when only eight years old, in 1660. As a nun she was noted for her zeal and fervour for the common good, her tender compassion and charity for the sick, and her humility. The most humble employments seemed always the most agreeable to her, and she would often labour with the lay-sisters."

The story of the Babthorpes is typical of that of many of our old Catholic families. During the years following the national apostasy their sons and daughters dedicated themselves to God in that spirit of reparation which, at every outrage offered Him, yearns to give Him a still deeper loyalty, a truer love, a more complete sacrifice. In their hearts was the longing which filled that of one of our first English lay-Sisters, of whom we read that "her desire had ever been to be a religious or to be made a martyr."

For of the religious life as of the martyr's combat it is true to say that in it "every paineful labour is a most joyful matter of glorie" and "to dye is to rise eternaly."

The words occur in a MS. over which the nuns of the Cloister of Nazareth must have often pondered, for it contains an account of the "Life and Martyrdome" of a kinsman of their first Prioress, and it was translated at her request into English.* In it we are told of Venerable Thomas Maxfield that "His dedicated hart to Christ did burne with zeal for such soules as perished and inwardly was much greeved to see men redeemed with the Precious blood of God to runne headlong into eternal punishment." And from the time that he was led out to death "his countenance was exceeding pleasant and chearful, as it becometh such as are designed unto martyrdome."

As we read the words we seem to catch an echo of the teaching which nourished the spiritual life of our first Sisters, and which surely caused their "dedicated harts to burne" with love of Christ and of the souls He died to save.

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* The Latin edition is thought to be written by Dr. Kellison, President of Douay College. Mother Standford frequently begged Father John Bolt (whose talent for music was so appreciated by Queen Elizabeth, see p. 234) to translate it into English. He finished his work in 1616 and dedicated it "to the Reverend and religious Mother Francis Standford, Prioresse of the English in Brugis." In June, 1882, the cause of the Beatification of Ven. Thomas Maxfield (or Macclesfield) being introduced, the then Prioress of Bruges gave the MS. to Father Morris, S.J., and it is now preserved at the Jesuits' residence at Farm Street.

VI

CARRYING ON THE OLD TRADITIONS

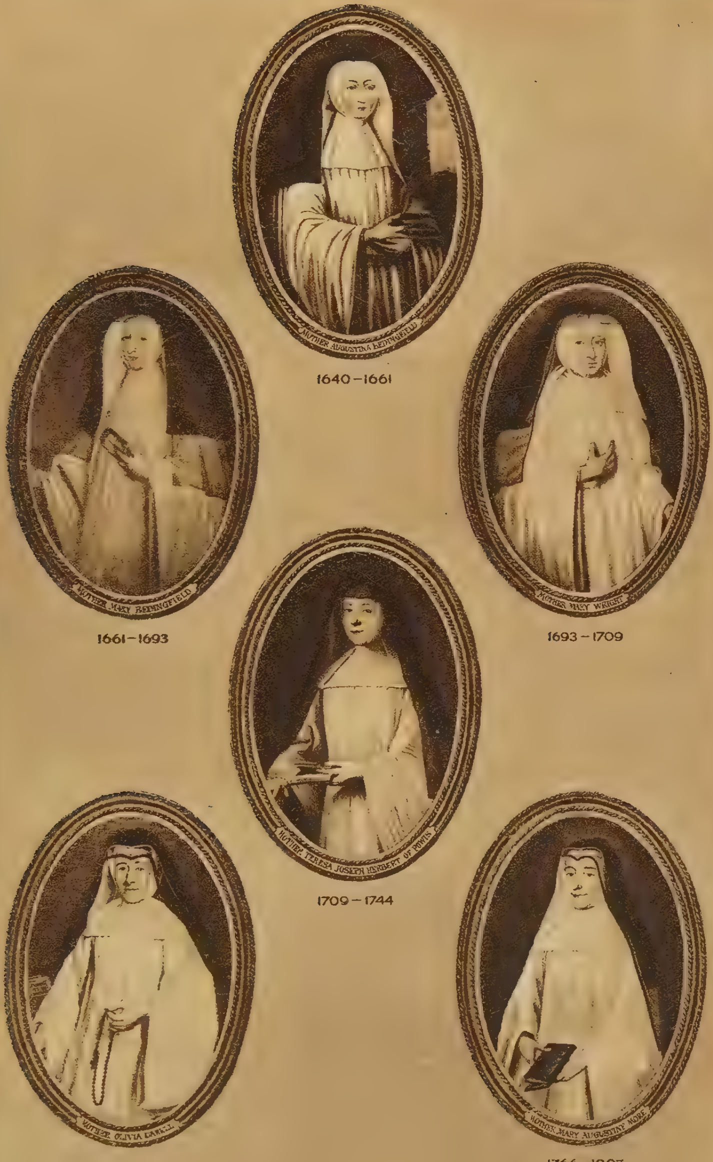
During the years of Mother Pole's government all debts had been paid off and vocations began to flow in, but the prosperity of the English Convent increased still more under the two succeeding Prioresses (both members of the Bedingfield family), so that in 1654 the Chronicler of St Monica's remarks in quaint phraseology that the Bruges House "had now received so many persons that they were a pretty community."

We have seen with what difficulty Mother Pole had obtained Sister Augustina Bedingfield, who she foresaw would be her successor. A few hours before she died she called this kinswoman of hers and "embracing her, recommended the house to her, entreating her to be resigned to what Almighty God, after her death, would impose upon her, and saying that she died most willingly leaving her here."

Mother Augustina, whom the elections placed at the head of the Community, was daughter to Francis Bedingfield of Redlingfield, a grandson of Sir Henry Bedingfield of Oxburgh, who had been among the first to join Queen Mary when, on the outbreak of Wyatt's rebellion, she summoned to her side at Kenninghall her "right trusty and well beloved, the true Englishmen of Norfolk"; and in 1654 she had committed to him the custody of the Princess Elizabeth.

The Bedingfields were not only true to their sovereign but also to their Faith, and they had much to suffer for their conscience. Thus John Bedingfield, Sir Henry's youngest son, died so despoiled of worldly goods on account of the large sums he had had to pay as a recusant and a harbourer of priests that, as the Chronicler writes, "about the time of his decease he said most devoutly: 'Lord, we have left all and followed Thee, what then shall be our reward?'"

Francis, Mother Augustina's father, married Catherine Fortescue, a descendant of both Blessed Adrian


MOTHER AUGUSTINA BEDINGFIELD
MOTHER MARY BEDINGFIELD
MOTHER MARY WRIGHT
MOTHER TERESA JOSEPH HERBERT OF POWIS
MOTHER OLIVIA DARELL
MOTHER MARY AUGUSTINE MORE

1640–1661

1661–1693

1693–1709

1709–1744

1744–1766

1766–1807

Six Prioresses of the English Convent, Bruges

To face page 258

Fortescue* and Blessed Margaret of Salisbury. The manor house of Redlingfield was a harbour for priests, and two Jesuits were always maintained there, the Holy Sacrifice being daily offered in the Chapel.

In this Catholic home, Helen, the future Prioress of the English Convent, was born in 1604; she was the eldest of thirteen children, of whom only two were sons. The daughters were all sent overseas to divers convents to be educated, and all became nuns.† Elizabeth, the youngest, according to the Bruges annals, married Sir Alexander Hamilton,‡ but being left a widow, entered the English Convent and was professed at the age of sixty-four. Her daughter, Lucy,§ also joined the Community, and Mary Bedingfield, daughter of Mother Augustina's brother John, succeeded her aunt as fourth Prioress in 1661.

It was under Mother Augustina that building was begun, the first donation for that purpose being a gift of £50 from her cousin, Mr. Henry Bedingfield. The town officials made a collection, which amounted to 500 florins, and the Convent of St Monica's at this time redeemed the life-rents of the religious who had come thence by giving a sum of £300. But perhaps the most interesting entry is a large alms from "one Mr. George Knebb, a great benefactor, a gentleman of Tournois, whose ancestors, as he told us, were of the kindred of St Thomas of Canterbury, who were banished with him in his exile out of England. This gentleman, having a good estate at Furnes, came to live in our town of Bruges. . . . In 1640 he brought us twelve pounds Flemish in six English pieces, which he continued to bring quarterly for several years . . . but in 1647, the French gaining much upon this country, caused great losses to many of our benefactors, and all Mr. George Knebb's lands were destroyed by them."

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* Sir Adrian Fortescue, Knight of St John, was beheaded in 1539. The bill of attainder alleges that "he had most traitorously refused his duty of allegiance, which he ought to bear to your Highness." He was cousin to Queen Anne Boleyn, who had been beheaded three years previously. The fact that Blessed Adrian was spared the horrors of Tyburn, says Dom Bede Camm, can have been only by the King's having extended to him the "mercy" which had caused Blessed Thomas More to exclaim: "God forbid that the King should use any more such mercy to any of my friends."

† Their names are as follows: Margaret, Abbess of the Poor Clares at Rouen; Philippa, a Benedictine at Ghent; Winefrid, Superioress of the "English Virgins" at Munich; Katherine, Prioress of the Carmelites at Antwerp; Grace, a Canoness Regular at St Monica's; Frances, foundress of the well-known Convent at York Bar; Magdalen, Prioress of the Carmelites at Neuburg; Anne, Abbess of the Poor Clares at Gravelines; Mary, who entered the same institute as her sisters, Winefrid and Frances.

‡ Grandson of Lord Claude Hamilton, who commanded the vanguard of Queen Mary's army at the battle of Langside, and whose father, James Earl of Arran and Duke of Chatelherault, was chosen Regent of Scotland in 1542, and the following year was declared heir presumptive to the infant Queen of Scots.

§ "1648. The Lady Elizabeth Hamilton sent her daughter Lucy, a child of eight years, to have her education in our cloister, and to be afterwards a religious amongst us, if it please God to call her, the child herself being very much inclined to it." In 1693 occurs the notice of her death; she is spoken of as a religious of great mortification, and as Novice-Mistress "she ever animated the novices to the practice of solid virtue, upholding the same by example, prayer, mortification, fasting, and watching." As is so often the case with mortified souls, she was noted for "being very charitable, compassionate, and tender to all." When asked on her death-bed if she were afraid to die, the answer was "no more than to fall asleep," thus testifying her childlike confidence in God's mercy.

The account books make grateful record of all contributors to the building fund, from the Archduke Leopold to "our good Apothecary's wife." Amongst the donations not the least touching are the small sums given by religious exiles who were themselves in poverty, such as that of the Carthusians of Sheen Anglorum,* who sent the few florins they could spare.

"On May 14, 1647, the Archpriest, representing the Bishop of Bruges, laid the first stone, which had the image of our Holy Father St Augustine engraved thereon; four stones were prepared, one for the Abbot of the Canons Regular of Eeckhout† (Oakwood) which was engraved with the Abbot's arms; one with the image of St Nicholas for the Benedictine Abbot of St Andrew's, another bearing the image of St Monica was laid by Monsieur St George, General Preston's son, and the fourth, which was of St Thomas of Canterbury, by Mr. George Knebb."

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* The English Charterhouse at Nieuport was so called in memory of the last Charterhouse to be suppressed in England, that of Sheen on the Thames, which had been founded in 1414 by Henry V.

† According to tradition St Trudo (A.D. 650) built an abbey in the great oak wood which stretched from Bruges far into the country. The site of the abbey (destroyed at the French Revolution) is now within the city. Wyntoun mentions it in the following lines, referring to Bishop Bane of St Andrews, who died there in 1323:

"The byshop of Sanct Andrewys then,
To Brugys past ow'r the sea;
His latter day there closed he
In the abbey of Akout (there
Canons are foundyt regulare)."

The extreme simplicity of the new building would have been entirely to the mind of the old fathers of Windesheim. It comprised a kitchen, a refectory and work-chamber opening on to a low narrow cloister, and above, a double row of cells.

It has remained unchanged to this day, save for the marks of time upon its grey walls. The Refectory in all its appointments is typical of the monastic "frater-house"; there—now, as three centuries ago, are the stone floor, the oak footboards, the long, narrow tables, with benches on the inside fastened to the walls which are lined halfway up with rushes in guise of wainscotting. There are also the leaded casements, the oak presses at one end, wherein are stored the linen, the pewter, and other refectory requirements, and at the other end is the serving-hatch from which the dishes are taken; above the seat of the Prioress hangs a large painting of the Crucifixion, and in front of her is the small bell used as signal for the beginning and end of the meal; the pulpit, near which sit the novices under the watchful eye of the Novice-Mistress, is one presented to the Community by Sir Gerard Kempe in 1649.

The workroom is now hung around with portraits of the Prioresses of the house, and also that of the old Mother Margaret Clement, who seems to look down on the "manie happie children out of England" by whom her memory is still cherished.

One cannot but think that she would have rejoiced in the fact that the first Visitation held in this second English Foundation was made by a great-grandson of Blessed Thomas More. This was Father Henry More, "an ancient Father of the Society of Jesus and a very prudent man," who was charged by the Bishop, Nicholas de Haudion, to hear all the religious in his name as they "had not the language of the country." Father Henry More had been imprisoned twice in England and had obtained his release in 1640, a few years before we find him acting as Visitor to the English Convent.*

In this Visitation it was proposed that Matins should henceforth be said at 4 a.m. instead of at midnight. "This change had not been desired by any of our community, and some had difficulty to submit to it, the midnight hour being so ancient a custom of our holy Order." It was represented to the Nuns that "divers cloisters of the Order" had adopted the change and their request that it should only be on trial was acceded to. This was in 1644, and in the following year we find the Community asking that the point should still remain undecided, but finally all "humbly yielded to the good motives alleged."

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* The *Meditations on the Life and Doctrine of Our Saviour Jesus Christ*" were first published at Ghent in 1656 and reprinted by Burns and Oates in 1880.

The rising at 3.30 a.m., and remaining without breaking their fast, even on non-fasting days, till the dinner hour at 10, may have seemed harder to some than the old horarium by which they rose at midnight, and after the Office retired to rest till 6, though it was sometimes 2 a.m. before they did so, as on high feasts all was sung, and after the Matins and Lauds of the day they recited those of Our Lady. The Fathers of Windesheim, before retiring, spent an hour in the scriptorium or in mental prayer, but this was never the custom of the Canonesses.*

During the Priorate of Mother Augustina Bedingfield we find frequent mention of visits from members of the English royal family then in exile. On April 23, 1656, is the entry: "On St George's eve, Charles II, King of Great Britany arrived to this town of Bridges to keep his court." And further on "this summer with the leave of our most Reverend Lord Bishop, we entertained our King in our refectory with a little collation, for his Majesty, with the Duke of Gloster and several of his Lords, honoured us with a visit and walked in our garden. The Duke of York also honoured us this year with a visit, but His Highness was only entertained at our grate, not entering the enclosure, that being excused upon expectation of the coming of the Princess, his sister, that they might enter together."

The sister whose coming was waited for, was the Princess Mary, who eight years previously had married William of Orange, and was already a widow, and mother of the Prince who was to supplant the Stuarts on the throne of England. She arrived from Paris in November, and in January, 1657, the Chronicler writes: "We had the honour to be visited again by our King and his sister, the Princess Royal, and the Duke of Gloster, who were entertained in our refectory with a small banquet. They had many lords and ladies with them, but the Duke of York was then out of town."*

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* The midnight rising is still kept up with great fervour in the convents of Newton Abbot and Hoddesdon, which have no school. In 1900 the Bishop of Bruges, in view of the schools at Bruges and Haywards Heath, with which the very early rising and the long fast seemed incompatible, enjoined that Matins and Lauds should be recited overnight, as is done by the Carmelites and many Benedictine Communities; the hour for rising was fixed at 4.45. Breakfast was already allowed, and the dinner hour is now 12.

The nuns, ardent royalists, must have looked with interest on the young Duke of Gloucester, still a mere boy, who at the age of seven had been taken to say good-bye to his father on the eve of his execution, and who had answered his injunctions not to allow himself to be made king while his two brothers lived, by the spirited words: "I will be torn in pieces first."

Charles II found himself surrounded in the Convent by those whose families had risked life and fortune in his cause. Nearly all the members of the Community of Bruges and Louvain had near relatives or close friends who had fought for him and his father during the Civil Wars.

The Bedingfields had lost over £47,000 through their loyalty, a sum Charles declared to be too great to repay.† Among the younger nuns were several whose Profession had been delayed by order of the Bishop on account of the impossibility of obtaining their dowries from their impoverished families.

Such a one was Sister Agatha Brooke, daughter of Sir Basil Brooke of Madeley Court, Shropshire,‡ who seems to have been a typical cavalier "of comely person in his youth" and of great gallantry. He used his influence at Court in favour of the Catholic religion, of which he was a faithful adherent. In 1644, the annals tell us, "He was taken prisoner by the Parliament in England, and his estate seized, whereby we failed of Sister Agatha's annuity (of £40), a great loss to us."

Another nun whose Profession had been deferred was Sister Dorothy Chetwynd. Her grandfather, John Chetwynd of Ingestre, had married a niece of Blessed Humphrey Middlemore, one of the Carthusian martyrs under Henry VIII, and her mother was Dorothy Coleman, sister to Father Walter Coleman, O.S.F., who, with six other priests, had been condemned to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for exercising their priestly office in England. This was in 1641, but Charles I had firmly refused to allow the execution, and Walter Coleman, after several years' imprisonment, died in Newgate in 1645.

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* James had quarrelled with the King and had retired to Holland.

† Shortly afterwards he conferred on the head of the Oxburgh branch the title of Baronet.

‡ And of Bishop's Court, near London. He married Etheldreda, daughter of Sir Thomas Brudenell, ancestor of the Earls of Cardigan. Under the reign of James I his name had appeared in a list of "such recusants as his Majesty hath granted liberty to his servants to make profit of." Sister Agatha Brooke died in 1678. In the obituary notice we are told that "she was always employed either in prayer or in humble works."

We can scarcely doubt that Charles II made himself charming on these visits to the Convent, for none ever knew better than he how to adapt himself to his company. But the nuns must have been far from guessing what is now generally admitted, that he was at this time a Catholic at heart and possibly already received into the Church.*

It would have saddened their hearts, indeed, could they have foreseen that under his reign no fewer than twenty-four martyrs would lay down their lives, among them the father of one of their own Sisters at Louvain, and this through the culpable weakness of the King, who owed so much to the loyalty of his Catholic subjects.†

In 1661 the Community received a visit by which they were far more honoured than by the gracious presence of "His Most Sacred Majesty": the visit of one of these future martyrs, Ven. William Howard, Viscount Stafford, himself grandson to another Martyr, Ven. Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel.

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* After the Battle of Worcester in 1651, he had met Father John Huddlestone, O.S.B. (then acting as tutor to the young Whitgreaves) at Mosely Hall, where Charles had been glad to avail himself of the priests' hiding-place and had visited the chapel in the attics. He seems from this time to have been convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith, and there are grounds for believing that he was actually received into the Church in 1655 during his stay in France, where he came under the influence of the saintly Monsieur Olier, so that on his death-bed he was "reconciled" rather than "converted" by Father Huddlestone. (See *La vie de Jean Jacques Olier*, by l'Abbé Faillon, and an article on the religion of Charles II by Mgr. Stapylton Barnes in the *Dublin Review*, January, 1908.) No less than six members of the Huddlestone family entered among the Canonesses of Bruges. There are in the archives two documents in the writing of Father Huddlestone: one is a copy of a paper written by "the late King Charles of Blessed Memorie" on the Catholic Church, and the other an account of the death of Charles II.

† From a letter written to the General of the Jesuits in 1685, we learn that Charles II never entered the boudoir in which the Queen kept the portraits of the Jesuits who were martyred on account of the Titus Oates Plot without turning to them "and kissing their hands would beg their forgiveness in the most humble manner . . . would make a most hearty protestation of his fault, and of their innocence, concluding by saying that they were in a place where they knew of a truth that he had been forced, and that they would therefore pray to God for him to pardon his crime" (Foley's *Records*, Series XII, p. 93).

The annals record that "On the 13th of November here arrived the right honourable Lord Stafford and his lady, with their daughter Sister Ursula Stafford, who had been professed a year before at Louvain, in our Cloister of St Monica's." It seems that "the motherly heart of Lady Stafford, full of kindness and tenderness to her daughter," had urged her to obtain from the Bishop of Mechlin leave to send Sister Ursula to Bruges in hopes that the change would benefit her health. The two Monasteries were very closely united, but this is the only instance we find of a Choir nun being thus sent for a time from one house to the other. "The Countess her mother, remained about ten days out of the enclosure and then went for England, leaving her little son who went to school in the town, and the Lord, their father, also boarded some time in our Father's house." In May, 1667, "Sister Ursula Stafford was taken out of our monastery by her father, in order to return to her monastery at Louvain."

It was in 1680 that Lord Stafford won the martyr's crown. His farewell letter to his "Good daughter" Ursula is still preserved at Newton Abbot. Another of his daughters had entered among the Dominican nuns at Brussels,* and a touching story is told in their records, which is given by Dom Hamilton and may be quoted here:

"It is handed down in the community that Sister Delphina [the Martyr's daughter], happened to be reader in the refectory the week of her father's execution, and Mother Prioress Barbara Boyle, wishing to have the account of it read at table to the religious, appointed another reader for the occasion. Sister Delphina begged so earnestly to be permitted to read it herself, that our Mother could not find it in her heart to withstand her. With wonderful, almost supernatural composure, she read the whole of it through . . . without betraying the least discomposure, but next morning it was found that her hair had become perfectly white. She was about twenty-two years old."

Mother Augustina Bedingfield lived to see the Stuart

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* The Dominican Nuns at Dartford, Kent (the only house of the Second Order existing in England at the time of the suppression of the Monasteries), sought refuge in Flanders, but gradually died out. In 1660 Cardinal Howard founded a Community of Dominicanesses at Vilvorde; they removed to Brussels in 1669, and are now represented by the nuns at Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight.

Restoration in 1660, to further which the nuns had contributed 1,000 florins, in spite of the expenses of the new buildings, undertaken at this time. In 1657 a Church had been begun,* and Mother Augustina laid the first stone of a new infirmary only a few weeks before her death, which occurred in the August of 1661.

She had governed the Community during twenty-one years, and "was esteemed by persons of the clearest judgement one of the most prudent and exemplary Superiors of the time . . . among worldly folks she had been known as a Wit, a Beauty, and a Saint," and her life in religion justified the last of these appellations. It was, indeed, a living commentary on her family motto: "Despicio terrena, solem contemplor." She had "contemned the kingdom of this world for the love of her Lord Jesus Christ,"† and in the cloister, "her heart and desires were fixed on Heaven . . . and in all she sought the greater glory of God." She was one of those who, having been powerfully drawn by God's love, cannot come in contact with other souls without drawing them also to Him, "bringing them swiftly to Him," as St Augustine writes, "and crying to them 'Love Him . . . Love Him,'" and their words are effectual because all recognize that "while they say these things their own hearts are burning with the fire of love."‡

The annals tell of "the true motherly affection by which she endeavoured that nothing should be wanting to any of her children," and of the great increase of temporal prosperity under her government, but they add that she did still more towards building up a solid spiritual life in the Community.

She could not be brought to declare whom she thought fittest to succeed her, saying she left the future to the Divine Providence, but "seeing her niece, Sister Mary Bedingfield, weeping sorely by her bedside, she exhorted her in a most affectionate and earnest manner not to afflict herself, telling her that whom God loves He chastises."

A marble slab in the cloister at Bruges perpetuates her memory and attributes to her example the entrance of her ten sisters into religious life.*

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* Not the present structure, which dates from 1736. The old Choir now forms part of the "Great Parlour" to which visitors are admitted.

† "Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum saeculi contempsi propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi." These words from the "Pontificale Romanum" are sung by the "Bride" at the ceremony of the Profession.

‡ *Confessions*, Book IV, chap. xii.

She was succeeded by her niece, Mary Bedingfield, who had been received as a " convictress " at the age of twelve, and at fifteen begged earnestly to be allowed to enter the Order. Her mother would not hear of it, and in 1647 sent for her to return home; she left " much against her own will and to the great grief of all in the community."

" The three years that a fond mother employed in diverting her from the thoughts of being a religious, instead of cooling her zeal for so happy a state of life, only inflamed it." She seems to have felt that by longer delay she would be endangering her vocation, " for being now grown tall and handsome, and finding the world dangerous for her, she fled from it, without her mother's knowledge. . . . She stole away from home alone in the dark silence of the night, and, though naturally at that age very fearful, passed through a churchyard also, not only leaving behind her what jewels or other things of value she had that the world might see 'twas the only treasure of her soul she was concerned to save, but even forgetting her shoes, till a thorn that pricked her foot minded her of them. She had with her only the clothes she wore, and left a letter on her table to secure her mother from fears, informing her that she was gone away to religion. She fled without the assistance of any one till she had passed the house; then in a lane by her appointment, an honest man waited for her with a horse, on which she mounted behind him and rode that night fourteen miles to a poor house, where she lay concealed, till she had an opportunity to go to the seaside. A narrow search was made everywhere after her, with such diligence, that once she evaded the pursuers by getting out at a back door when she saw them enter the house she was in. At the seaside she was met by her uncle, Mr. Henry Bedingfield, who was coming over and he, at his own charges, brought her hither to our monastery, a true Nazareth to her, where she was most joyfully welcomed by all . . . and received as a scholar for the Order." After four years' Profession she was given the charge of Mistress of Novices and six years later was elected Prioress. "The distracting cares of that employment," says the Chronicler, "never interrupted a most tender union with God, which was ever present to her thoughts and sensibly affected her heart."

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* DESPICIO TERRENA

HIC JACET
CUJUS OPERA COENOBII
TEMPLIQUE HAEC MOLES STAT
VERUM EJUS PERPETUUMQUE MONUMENTUM
MATER AUGUSTINA BEDINGFIELD
EX NOBILI DE BEDINGFIELD
& DE FORTISCUTO PROSAPIA
VIRTUTUM OMNIUM EXEMPLO NOBILIOR
QUO DECEM SORORES
IN SUI PELLEXIT IMITATIONEM
CHRISTOQUE DICAVIT SPONSAS
IN VARIIS SACRARUM RELIGIONUM ORDINIBUS
IN QUIBUS & FERE OMNES PRAEFUERUNT
FILIAS XXVI HIC DEO DEDIT
SACRO EAS SUB VELO DEDICANS
TOTA UNI DEO
SINGULIS SUIS FILIABUS VIXIT:
HARUM IN MEMORIA
ILLIUS IN AMORE SEMPER VICTORIA.
OBIIT REGIMINIS XXI ANNO
PROFESSIONIS XXXIX, VITAE LVIII
CHRISTI MDCLXI AUGUSTI XI

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

During the last seven years of her life she was never free from pain, and often got but a very few hours' rest, yet she would constantly rise for the early Matins and would never be absent from the Office; indeed, "when scarce able to stand, she would with great difficulty get to the Choir, and read and sing there as if in perfect health. In her most violent pains she earnestly begged for an increase of patience, but never asked any diminishing of her sufferings."

Her death, in 1693, seems to have been hastened by an excess of spiritual joy: "For on the eve of the Ascension, while the nuns were singing the Litanies in the garden, she forced herself from her bed to the window, and was taken by so violent a transport of joy at the sight of so many and so virtuous Spouses of Christ, to most of whom she had given the holy veil, that it suddenly sunk her strength."

The next day she received the Holy Viaticum; it was a fitting day for the passing of such a soul, for her longing to be with Christ was so great that during six years "her continual aspiration had been 'Quando veniam et apparebo ante faciem Domini?' (When shall I come, dear Lord, and appear before your blissful eyes?)"

Mother Mary Bedingfield had completed the buildings begun by her predecessor, and had added to them a wide, marble-paved cloister, over which were eleven cells, so that the Community were no longer "cramd in the poor old house."

While she was Prioress the Community, and indeed the whole town, had been edified by the holy life and death of an inmate of the chaplain's quarters. This was Sir Edward Widdrington, who during the Civil War had raised two regiments for the King at his own expense, and had himself commanded the body of cavalry, which was 2,000 strong. At the Restoration he had received no adequate compensation (owing, it is said, to the fact of his being a Catholic), and being greatly impoverished, he left England to settle at Bruges. The annals have the following entries:

"On the 23rd of August [1670] here came the Lady Widdrington;* her husband, Sir Edward Widdrington, had lived several years before in this town, and for some time in our Father's house, a most extraordinary virtuous life, and taking a great affection to our cloister, for the retirement and quiet he observed in it, he desired to have his lady come, who had an inclination to leave the world and be a religious, and he intended himself to take upon him the holy order of Priesthood the same day she should make her vows of religion. Her Ladyship consulted the Prior of the English Carthusians at Newport, and presently entered our Monastery and applied herself to learn Latin, etc. But a few weeks later she fell into a tedious and dangerous sickness, received all the rites and remained sick all the winter.

"1671. On the 13th of June Sir Edward Widdrington died in our out-quarters after a long sickness, being exhausted with most rigorous fasting and austerities, which he practised for many years before his death. He began his most extraordinary devout life here in Bridges, by a pilgrimage which he made on foot to Rome, where having finished in some months his visits and devotions to those holy places, he returned again on foot to this town where he spent near seven years, rising daily at four in the morning, continuing his prayer and devotions till twelve at noon; then he took for refreshment only the third part of a stiver loaf and some beer. At night his supper was the worst sort of fish, never eating either eggs or milk, and on Fridays and many other days fasting only on bread and water.

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* Christina Stewart, granddaughter to Francis Stewart, first Earl of Bothwell.

"He lay continually on the ground, or on some bed of straw, and gave to the poor all he saved on diet and other expenses, which life was the more admirable in him because he had spent his days before in so much prodigality and pleasure. He made a most pious and happy end, and was buried in the Capuchin's habit in their Church.* The whole town had a great esteem and veneration for him, and several who recommended themselves to his prayers found great assistance and help in their infirmities, and I hope our community will also find good effects from his intercession for us in heaven, he having had so singular an affection for us on earth. R.I.P. About three weeks after Sir Edward's death his lady returned to England, not being yet recovered from her long sickness." This account was probably written by Mother Mary Bedingfield.

Among those whom she had received into the Order was one who, like herself, had fled from her father's house to obey the Divine Call, though under very different circumstances. The story of the conversion and vocation of Sister Catherine Holland will one day be published separately, but must be given here almost in its entirety, for, if we except the autobiography of Sir Toby Matthew, we have no more interesting record of a conversion at this period.

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* "He asked to be buried beneath the porch so that he might be trampled upon by all those who went to or came from the church." (See *Carmel in England*, by Father Zimmerman, O.C.D., p. 270.)

VII

A CONVERSION IN THE DAYS OF CHARLES II

On the list of Canonesses professed at Bruges there occurs, between the Catholic and loyalist names of Mannock and Petre, that of Sister Catherine Holland, daughter of a Protestant and a prominent Parliamentarian to boot. She herself wrote, by order of her confessor, an account of the steps by which she found her way into the true fold, and entered a Community as intensely loyal to the Stuarts as that of the English Convent.

She was born in 1637 of John Holland of Quidenham, Norfolk,* who was created Baronet by Charles I in 1629. Sir John sat in the Long Parliament as member for Norfolk, and took the side opposed to the King. He served as a Colonel at the beginning of the Civil War, and was one of the Commissioners sent to treat of peace with Charles. He was moderate in politics, however, and was disgusted by the execution of the King in 1649 and by other extreme measures advocated by the advanced Republicans.

At the beginning of the troubles in England (as early as 1642) he had sent his wife and children to Bergen-op-Zoom in the South of Holland, where they remained till 1652, when war broke out between the English and Dutch Republics, and Sir John removed his family to Bruges. He himself spent his time partly there and partly in his own country, where, being a member of Parliament, his presence was often required.

In 1655, when, as we have seen, Charles II settled with his exiled Court in Bruges, Sir John removed his family once more to Bergen-op-Zoom, for peace had been signed between England and Holland, and the neighbourhood of the English Royalists was probably awkward for one who was opposed to them in politics.

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* The Hollands of Quidenham claimed descent from the Hollands of Upholland and Denton in Lancashire, and bore as arms the same lion and lilies with the motto: " Secreta mea mihi." They were in Norfolk by the time of Henry VIII; Quidenham Park is now the property of the Earl of Albemarle. (From a note communicated by Mr. Bernard Holland, who has kindly furnished much of the information here given as to Sir John and his family.)

Catherine returned to England with her father about the year 1657, and stayed with an aunt till 1659, when she again went to Holland " and fooled away another two years in vain amusements."

In 1660 Sir John Holland sat in the new Council of State which arranged the Restoration, and the following year his family finally returned to their own country. Catherine was then twenty-four, and in 1662, having become convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion, she fled from her father's house in London to the Convent at Bruges.

Her Catholic mother was Alethea, daughter and heiress to Lord Sandys. She had, besides Catherine, four daughters and six sons; she died in 1679; her husband survived till the year 1700, when he died at the age of ninety-seven.

These details will help to a clear understanding of Sister Catherine's " Narration," which shall be given in her own words, a few omissions being made regretfully for the sake of brevity.

The bold and firm hand of the MS. preserved at Bruges is quite in conformity with what the story of her conversion reveals of her character. After its perusal we are prepared to agree fully with the statement that " Sister Catherine Holland had a satyrical sharp Wit, with a high spirit," and we can understand that these must have " engaged her in frequent combats between Nature and Grace." These words occur in the short notice prefixed to her " Narration," but we will now leave her to speak for herself:

" The following things I write down to Almighty God's Honour and Glory:

Sept. 20th, 1664.

HOW I CAME TO CHANGE MY RELIGION

To the Reader.

To the end to give the World to understand that I changed my Religion not rashly, without Grounds or by Perswasion, I will leave here behind me in my own Hand the Manner how, and the Reasons why, I was converted from being a Protestant to become a Roman Catholic. . . .

I were unpardonably ungrateful should I not declare God's Goodness towards me, whilst I went seeking my own Ruin and fled from Him; a long Time (to my shame be it spoken) did I resist His frequent Inspirations before I would hearken to them or obey them, as will appear in the following discourse. I will set down everything as it happened to me, and that with all manner of Simplicity and Truth.

Farewell.

1657. I having the ill Fortune, even with my Milk, to suck in Heresy, I was bred up in the same by a severe Father; who tho' an earnest Protestant, self Interest, and to advance his Fortunes, made him take to wife a Catholick Lady, whose Riches made her Religion tolerable; yet much more was it laudable, since it taught her so much Goodness and Virtue, as I have heard him say she was the Mirrour of Wives, and would often times admonish me, saying imitate your Mother (putting in this Clause) in all things but her Religion. And to the End none of his children should embrace it, he took them all into his own Care, and bred them up in his Religion which was Protestant.

Now he being a man of great Capacity, and morally virtuous, had very excellent Maxims; gave us very good moral Instructions; catechised us himself. Yet this do I remember, that I had a strange Aversion to learn Catechism, and although I was so young, as I knew not what Conscience meant, yet I would often say, it went against my Conscience to learn it, for which I was often severely corrected, because he could not make me learn it.

He learnt me himself both to write and to read; and in his Absence would appoint other protestant Friends to do it; and altho' he could not molest my Mother in her Religion, yet he would not permit her to instruct any of her Children, which was no small a Cross to her. She, notwithstanding would learn us our Prayers and would often be saying in my hearing there was but one Truth, and, that out of that, there was no Salvation; and would often admonish me to pray to God to bring me into that Truth; and I did often say in my Heart, If I am not in the Truth, Lord bring me into Thy Truth.

Now between the Suggestions of my Mother and the Instructions of my Father, which were so contrary one to the other, as I knew not which to chuse, troubled I was, but had nobody to speak unto; this I can avouch with much Truth, that from ye Time I had capacity to distinguish between Religions, I still inclined more to my Mother's than to my Father's, although I was ignorant what my Mother's did contain. This inclination was so perceptible that the Servants would often say amongst themselves, that they were confident that when I came to be of Age and at my own Disposal, that I would turn Papist.

But notwithstanding the great Inclination I had to the Catholick Religion, ye great fear I stood in of my Father, made me dissemble my Inclinations for many years, the Seed lay hidden in the Field of my Heart, that was to bring forth Fruit long after, when the Dew of Divine Grace had watered it more abundantly.

In the mean time being young I gave myself to as much Pleasure as I could, tho' not as much as I would, for doubtless had not my Father (or rather divine Providence, which acted by him) held me back, I had run (through ye Perverseness of my own Nature) into many great dangers, both of Life and Honour; in so much as my Father would say: 'If that Girl knew she would be hanged the next Hour, she would venture to get her Will'; so as he had always his Eye upon me.

I had many Fallacies to get my will, and durst act what my Sister, of a milder Temper, durst not think. My Father observing this Disposition in me, and that I was an Opiniatour, and very crafty, often abusing my Mother's Goodness, took me under his own Tuition, after an especial Manner, and often told me he would break my Will, or my Heart; and was very severe to me, feeding me whilst I was in my Minority, with a Bit and a Knock; although then I thought it hard Usage; yet since, I have blessed him for it; for had I had an Indulgent Father, I had been ruined. Yet notwithstanding his strict Watch I often cozened him, and got my Will in secret, taking Delight to eat the forbidden Fruit, to the admiration of some who knew how severe he was. This I must confess that my Perverseness was such to all his precepts as I was never better pleased as when I had deceived him.

The better to declare Almighty God's Mercies to my erring Soul, I will relate how he preserved me in ye midst of my Perverseness in the time of my youth.

Being about ten years of Age, and my Father, for my Good, holding a strict Hand over me, severely corrected me, if I learnt not my Catechism, debarred me from my Meat, and if I remembered not the Sermons, I was made to write them down, and for the least Fault still reprehended, I grew even desperate and weary of my Life, and was twice tempted to put a Period to these my tedious Days by making away with myself; but in this Passion I called out aloud that I was going to do it, and did not know I did so, upon which my Sister stopt me and held me fast and prevented me. On another Time fearing to come in the Presence of my Father having neglected my Duties, I did resolve to fling myself out of the Window to break my Neck, but as Providence would have it the Desire of dying running in my Head, I did chance to ask my Mother, if such as were Authors of their own Death went to Heaven; she answered me, no, they were damned because they did an Act contrary to God's Will. She little thought why I asked this Question. Now behold the Goodness of God, just as I had got half out of the Window what my Mother had told me came fresh into my Memory; as also, that possibly God Almighty would not permit me to dye by the Fall, but only break some Limb, and so be lame all my Life. These Thoughts passed not as ordinary Thoughts do, but they were so lively, and made so deep an Impression, as they seemed rather an Admonishment from Heaven. Hell and Lameness so terrify'd me as I soon crept in again, and walked through the Briars of Tutorship until I got Capacity enough to see that it was better bending than breaking; I began to be a little more tractable, and as years came on I did comply better, and had better Usage; but still I was kept at Arm's Length, and made to obey at a Beck, which was a great Mortification to my high bound Nature, which did affect nothing but be independent. One Proceeding of my Father's did me much Good, though then it was very irksome to me: He would never grant me any Request, if I desired it with Earnestness; and if at a Denial I seemed troubled and discontented, he would be sure to redouble his Refusal: He would have me come and demand Things with a perfect Indifference, and when I did so, he would not deny me; for his usual Maxim was, That a woman that could not deny herself what she list, could not be a fine Woman.

Thus went divine Providence fitting my unpolished Soul by the Hand of my Father for what it had designed.

I passed over the most part of my Youth, as most young Women do, in Idleness and Vanity as much as lay in my Power; for I was kept very short, which made me the more covetous of pleasure, and those I got by Stealth were the sweetest; and many a merry a Meeting, I and my Companions had, was never known; Yet notwithstanding I do well remember after my great Pastime of Pleasure, such as Dancing (which I loved above any Thing) Carding, Musick and the like, when they were past, I found my Mind uneasy, and unsatisfied, reflecting with Regret, how short, and passing they were, and that they left behind them Nothing but Disgust, and a sensible Pain that they were so short: so as I can not say, I had any true solid Content in the greatest worldly Pleasure I ever received for my Senses were ever craving more of what they liked; and lingered after what they could not have, or might not have. . . . Thus Pleasure proved a Torment, and between Pleasure and Torment I Passed over several Years, wherein I had but passing thoughts of Religion, which sprung from my Mother's frequent Suggestions, that I was not in the Truth.

Now our Family having taken its Flight out of England into Holland in the Times of the Troubles and Civil Wars in England between the King and Parliament, in the time of Oliver Cromwell; we remained in Holland, among those Reformed, many Years until new Troubles happening of Wars between Holland and England, being of the Nation we were again driven from thence, and went to dwell in Flanders, and about the sixteenth Year of my Age, I arrived in Bruges, to which all our Family was sent, my Father being in England. This was a great Providence for me, for this Town being a Catholick City, my former Inclination to the Catholick Religion began to revive; and now I began to see what that was I had formerly heard of. There it was, that I was unbeguiled and saw that all Protestants had told me concerning the Catholicks was not true: I had a greater Desire than ever to be a Catholick; but durst not let it be known I had such a desire, for Fear of my Father. Often did I venture to steal out to Church although I did not know what to do there; nor did I understand what was done: Mass and the Ceremonies thereof, was a strange thing to me; Yet methoughts there was something I knew not what, that moved Devotion more than any Thing I had seen in the Protestant Churches. The Order and Good Decorum I saw in all Church-men and

Church Ceremonies, did seem to speak something of adoring a Divinity. I daily did more and more incline to the Catholicks, and had a great Desire to inform myself of the Inside of That, whereof I liked so well the outside, but neither knew how, nor which Way, not daring to trust any Body . . . at last I know not how, I had learnt the *Ave Maria* by Heart. I got a pair of Tens, which I ty'd next me, and kept very secret, and at Night would say them on my Knees before I went to Bed, with much Satisfaction but I knew not with what Intention.

All this Time my mind not having any One to ease itself unto was troubled, and was infinitely oppressed; and the more, in Regard I saw little Probability of a Release, as long as my Father lived. I many Times earnestly prayed Almighty God to lead me into his Truth, and not let me perish through Ignorance: for as you will see by what follows, that my Ignorance was great; for hearing of, and seeing in ye Catholick Church so many several Orders of Religious Men and Women, I thought that every Order was a several Sect or Religion, which struck me into a strong Perplexity; that seeing it was said, that there was but one Truth, by which One could be saved, it was, to my thinking, impossible among such a Variety of Religions to find out that one Truth; which put me almost out of Hopes of finding it; and consequently less Courage to look after it.

One Day stealing out I went to the Jesuit Church and being there gotten into a Corner still praying I might find the Truth, and being much perplexed with divers Cogitations how I should find out this one Truth (I smile now at my Simplicity), there chanced to pass by two of the Society; I looked earnestly upon them, and said in simplicity of Heart lifting it up to God: 'Lord, if these Men in Black (these were my very Words) are of the Truth, make me of their Religion.' At which Time methought I found my Mind eased, and my Heart replenished with Hopes, for a Time; but as soon as I was returned Home my wonted fear seized me, and I durst not show the least Inclination to be Catholick.

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After three Years being in this Catholick Town I got acquaintance at ye Monastery where now I am; but at that Time I thought it a miserable Life always to be locked up as in a Prison; That Manner of Life did not then please me at all, and I little thought, I was to be one of those, I thought them so unhappy. In this Time my Knowledge of the Catholick Religion did increase by means of Catholick Books, which I grew so fond of, as I gave a gold Ring for one.

Now at the Time of the King of Great Britain's Arrival at Bruges in Flanders, Charles ye Second, in ye Time of his Exile, then, I say, did my Father, out of Policy remove his Family, and went to live in Holland at a Place called Bergen op Zoom: here now was I again out of the reach of any Catholicks, and engaged to go to their reformed (or rather deformed) Church; being over-powered I was fain silently to conform, forced on by Necessity. Here for want of Fewel did my former Fire almost go out; or rather, it was raked up attending Time and Opportunity, I now concluding that it was an impossible Thing, as long as my Father lived, to become a Catholick, so as I did lay by the thought, though the Inclination ever stuck to me, and turned my self to court Pleasures being now just an Age to entertain them, and meeting with many Companions of my own Age and Strain, and as it were then but stepping into that Part of the World that may chiefly be called the vain World; for in that Town did a German Prince who marryed the Marchioness of the Town, keep his Court; there it was that I did give my self to all Sorts of Vanities, encouraged thereto by being her Daughter's Favourite: There Dancing, Plays, Cards, and Sports was my chief Religion; all serious thoughts were vanished; I being of a Disposition naturally merry and recreative there was no Sport without me, I being still the Ringleader of all the Farces and sportive Fooleries.

Thus whilst I forgot Almighty God, most ungratefully neglecting his frequent Inspirations, his Goodness and Providence forgot not me; and although I did often stumble, and commit many gross Follies, wherein both Life and Honour were in Jeopardy, his infinite Goodness never permitted me to fall out-right, tho' I ventured fairly, my Conscience doth not accuse me of any deliberate malicious Act, or any ill Intention, but of great Indiscretions, that might have had an ill Consequence; and my Preservations would cause no little Admiration, were it convenient to come to particulars. The invisible Hand of God still held me up from falling by the Perverseness of my own Nature much more inclined to Evil than to Good.

In this vain and unprofitable Life I spent seven

Years, after which I went with my Father into England, out of which I had been from my four Years of Age. This Novelty, wch I had long desired, took my Fancy wholly up, and being arrived there I lived according to the Dictaments of Sense, all Sparks of Piety seemed to be extinguished; I did there wallow in Pleasure without any true Delight; being with an Aunt and Uncle who did make much of me I had whatsoever my Heart could desire for to please Sense; yet notwithstanding I can avouch this with much Truth, I had no true interior Content, but was many Times plunged in a deep Melancholly, being many Times at a Loss; Something methoughts was wanting, but I could not tell what: many Times would I steal away to walk all alone in the Woods ruminating, and thus discoursing with my self: What am I ? Why am I ? What is this World ? Who made it ? What will be the End thereof ? Then would I answer my self: That it was God, that was the Authour of it. Then with admiring his Works I would say, But where is this God ? How to be found and comprehended ? My own judgment told me, that none but an infinite supreme Power could be the Authour of such a vast Fabrick; but what to conceive of this Power, and how to represent it to my self, I knew not, and much perplexed I would remain; I could come to no Certainty concerning this God, and not knowing which Way to inform my self, this drew me into great Pensiveness, which did blunt ye edge of all my Pleasure.

One Time above all the Rest I remember being in the Fields all alone deeply ingaged in these pensive Thoughts I had a great War within my self, and having driven my Mind into a deep Labyrinth by diving into things above my Capacity and not being able to come to a conclusion, What nor Where God was; I at last began to doubt whether there was a God, or no, measuring every Thing by the shallow Measure of my own Wit. I then fancy'd that possibly ye World was from Eternity, had never Beginning, nor never should have End, and that the Belief of the Immortality of ye soul was but a Fiction; for thought I, how can a Soul live, and act, without the Organs of the Body ? And as for the Thing they called Religion and Heaven, and Hell, I thought that was but ye Invention of cunning politick Men for to keep People in Awe, and for the better Government of Nations, who must be kept in Fear with Something besides Moral Laws. My Fancy had no sooner traced over this disjointed Discourse, but presently a strong Contradiction did spring up in my Mind and a formal Dispute; in so much as, since, I have admired I did not break my Brains, considering how young I was, not yet twenty years of Age, weak and ignorant, and nobody to give me a Solution or inform me. Although these former Things were strongly suggested I did not rest in them, nor gave no deliberate Consent; They notwithstanding brought with them great Disquiets, and left me still upon uncertainties and often would I answer this erroneous Spirit, that there must needs be a God, and that it was impossible that the World, that seemed daily to decay, should be eternal; if it were, I was curious to know what it was, that gave it its Laws, for I observed that every created Thing had its proper Law, and Bounds, and Order, each Thing having its proper Nature and Instinct; I observed the constant Successions of Seasons, the Retreat and Return of Sun and Moon at a prefixed Time, and every Thing did constantly tend to the End it was created for; but could not tell to what End I my self had a Being; methoughts according to natural Reason, there was a first Cause independent of all other, but what to conceive this to be, I could not imagine; for being wrapped up in Nature I could only see by her obscure Lights, I could not comprehend a Thing, that was spiritual, no more than a blind Man can conceive and comprehend, by his Touch, Smell, Hearing or Taste what a Colour means; Those Senses being incapable to do the Function of the Eyes, which Sense can only give Intelligence to the Understanding of a blind Man what a colour is; as unapt was I, at that Time, to conceive that God is a Spirit, but like a blind ignorant Fool would square and bring the Essence of an incomprehensible Deity within the narrow Compass of my weak Capacity. I might as well have stroven to have brought the Globe of this World within the Compass of a Ring, or the Sea into Cistern.

Thus with glorious Saint Austin I went seeking That without me, that was within me. In brief; many strange Disputes and Discourses would occur to my Mind, if I were but a moment alone: The Truth of the very Scriptures would I call into question, conceiving them to have been forged by the Wit of Man out of Policy.

Thus far was I strayed from my former Inclinations to the Catholick Religion, in so much as I had almost lost all Religion and turned Atheist; only the Goodness of

Almighty God still kept the former Spark alive, and kept me from a positive Consent; There was so much of the Life of Grace left, as I may say, as held me in Debate: and one certain Thought occurring to my Mind did, as it were, quicken me, and set me on my legs again, whilst I was thus tottering between Grace and Nature. I called to mind that I had heard many Things told for certain, that Spirits walked, and that many souls have appeared on occasions; and although I was not very apt to believe all the Stories I heard of that Kind I thought it absurd to believe Nothing, as well as Lightness to believe every Thing; when it was related by Persons of Credit; and if I yielded to believe the Return of Souls, I was consequently compelled to believe the Immortality of the Soul. Then did I conclude that there was an incomprehensible God, which must be a Spirit, and spiritually to be comprehended: Then did I humbly beg him to take this misbelieving Spirit from me and direct me into His Truth.

Thus was I several Years troubled in Spirit and tossed up and down with every Fancy; and in the meanwhile I had no-body to instruct me, or inform me; and being of a close Nature and not knowing where to address my self, these inward Perplexities still increased, which cast me into a deep Melancholy and gave a Check and a Period, for a Time to my natural Chearfulness.

Many admired, but none could guess at the Reason of this Change of Humour in me. I began to be very weary of England and, as a Thing out of its Center, restless and unquiet. My Father being upon his Return gave me my Choice either to return to my Mother, or remain with my Aunt, but most Happily I chose to return Home, which made a Passage, better, then, known to divine Providence than myself, for my future Progress.

In this my journey at Sea, Almighty God touched my Heart in a more especial Manner, for having concluded with my self there was a God, an Heaven, and an Hell, and that my Soul was immortal: These following Things were interiorly suggested to me; for being in the Ship very Sea-sick, ill accommodated and very uneasy, confined to a little Cabin, tossed and tumbled by that moving Habitation, so as I could get no Rest nor Ease, and this uneasy Life lasting several Days, the Time grew very tedious to me, and methought I would have given the whole World, had it been mine for a Release. Whilst I was thus uneasy, suddenly these serious

Thoughts came into my Mind and that after a very lively Manner; not simply and passively but impressively; so as I could not but take notice of them. I remembered what an idle and fruitless Life I had led in England, and seeing I did now believe there was a God, and another world, eternal Pleasure, and eternal Pain, I did put the Case, that I had died in England, and that by the just Judgment of God in Punishment for my Sins he had condemned me for an Eternity to suffer what then I suffered, which I thought so intolerable, in how deplorable a Condition I was, and that I had bought my Pleasure very dear; and how now I should repent my former Neglects and condemn my Folly, for such short Pleasures I should have cast my self into such lasting Misery. Then I did reflect, that if so be, Hell was such as all Christians spoke it to be that there was no Comparison between their Sufferances, that were there and mine; and that a damned Soul, to be released from the Torments I was in, would think it self happy to be where I thought my self unhappy: and then I thought consequently that I did not know how soon I might die, and be cast into a worse place for Eternity.

These Cogitations made so lively an Impression, as it seemed not so much a Meditation made by me, as an Admonishment made unto me.

I, upon these Reflections, turned my Heart and Mind to Almighty God and begged of his divine Majesty to spare me. Then the old Doubts returned, whether I was in the Truth and in a Religion in which I could be saved: and then in my Heart I did make a Promise to Almighty God That, if he did please to bring me safe to Land, I would turn over a new Leaf, and seek after his Truth, and lead a new Life; But these fervorous Prayers were made at Sea and in Pain, and in Danger, and soon forgot when once safely got to Land.

Here my Ingratitude, and God's great Goodness, and Mercy may be seen; for I being no sooner safely arrived into Brabant and at my old Home amongst my Friends and Acquaintances much made of and caressed, and being again lulled asleep with the Pleasures of the Court, I thought no more of my fine Promises at Sea, but fooled away another two Years in vain Amusements.

Whilst I thus most ungratefully forgot God, his infinite Goodness forgot not me, but at the End of these two years gave me, as I may say, another pull by the Sleeve, to make my straying Soul come Home to itself;

for one Morning being in my Closet, saying my wonted Morning Prayers, I found a more sensible Devotion than ever I felt before, which did, as it were, allure me to continue praying; and being insensibly ingaged all the Promises I had made at Sea came lively into my Mind and seemed to reprehend me: and an Impression was made in me how ill I had complyed with them. I was struck with a deep Remorse of Conscience and grew sad, and methought that suddenly it was, as if it were, interiorly in my Heart said unto me: 'There is no fooling with God.' And this was so pressing as I had no Power to rise from the place I was kneeling in, until I had renewed my Promises, and resolved positively on Something. Then again rise the Doubts concerning ye Truth of my Religion: I then at that very same Time, renounced the Protestant Errours, and the Religion I was brought up in, and resolved to embrace the Catholick Truth and to break through all Oppositions whatsoever. I found myself at the same Moment strengthened and incouraged and from that very Hour I broke off in my Heart with the World in so much as all admired my Change. I now hated what I loved before. From this Time I stood my Ground and fell back no more; Heaven gave here the last Stroke, which was the efficacious Grace that carried me on. So great a Goodness had Almighty God for me notwithstanding my divers Infidelities and running as I may say, from him having so many Ways and so often called me.

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I being at this Time in the Prime of my Youth, courted for my Riches rather than for any Thing else advantageous in me, daily at Court, in Pleasures and Sports: I was of a Religion, I was bred and born in, continually amongst Protestants, a Father an earnest Protestant whom I both loved and feared; my Mother though a Catholick, yet of no help to me, nor advantageous to my desires, but by her pious Prayers, wch as another Monica, with Tears, she often offered for me, and doubtless drew down Mercies towards me, and procured me invisible Help, instead of that I might have expected from her; the Love she had for my Father being loth to offend him, made her, she durst act nothing in my behalf; so as I did keep my Designs as privately from her as from the Rest. The Marchioness of the Town being my Friend and a Catholick, yet in this Occurrence refused me her Help not to disoblige my

Father. Which Way soever I turned myself I found none to join with me, but enough to oppose me; none to take any counsel of, this cast me into great Perplexities of Mind and deep Melancholy: The Cause none could guess at, for I had not yet declared my self: my pleasant Humour was again over-clouded: nothing now but Solitude, reading and Prayer was my delight; which was often interrupted by the Combats of my Mind, which were frequent; for on the one Side I was forced to continue in a Religion I thought false, and could not avoid going weekly to Church against my Conscience: on the other side, to declare my self I durst not: the Fear I was in of my Father's Displeasure, did still predominate: Then an Apprehension took me what the World would say: how I should be slighted by my Friends and Acquaintances. If I should leave them all, and retire from the World, and go to a Monastery, I saw no Possibility or Probability, having neither Means nor Opportunity, nor hardly knew where, or how to make my Address.

In the Midst of the Labyrinth I was in, the Winding of which I did not well know how to get out of, having Nobody to lend me their Hand, I made my continual Addresses to Heaven, who never forsakes those, that sincerely seek its Help.

I found my Self daily Strengthened and my Resolution still firmer; although new Difficulties did daily arise, which increased my Sadness; in so much as it was very notable and much taken Notice of. Ye World could guess at nothing but what itself understood, and by Many it was said, I was possessed by that foolish Passion called Love, or being in Love. It was Love indeed, but not that kind of Love they fancied: I had now forsaken and cast away those Fooleries, and had higher Thoughts, the World could not understand: I had found out an Object much more worthy of my Heart and Affections, than anything the vain World could afford, and daily did I find my Heart drawn from the Worldly Delights, which begun to be Torments to me; and an earnest Desire possessed me to withdraw myself from them, notwithstanding the great difficulties there would be in it.

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All this did not so startle me, as to make me give over my Pursuit; my Hopes were still great, and I found my self inwardly strengthened. Thus whilst Grace played its Part in the superior Part of my Soul, Nature acted its Part in the Inferior Part, which caused a continual Combat which served to increase my Pensiveness and Melancholly, which my Mother taking Notice of was troubled to see me so sad, who used to be so merry, she not being able to find out the Cause, though she had employed many to sift it out; at last she did acquaint my Father, who was then in England, to prepare for our Return, for as yet we were in Brabant.

Now some may justly admire That, considering my Mother was a Catholick, I did not impart my Mind to her; I have given an Hint at the Reason I hid it from her before, and now I will add two Motives: The One was, that I feared I might have been the Cause of making Difference between my Father and Mother, who had lived so many years in such mutual Concord; I conceived my Father would have presently accused her, that she had perswaded me; and whilst I left her in Ignorance she could clear herself, and satisfie him; for it would have been a double Cross to have them at Variance about me. My second Motive was That I doubted if she would have had Resolution enough to have helped me through those Difficulties, I foresaw I was to wade through; for I knowing her to be of a Nature mild and somewhat timorous, I could not promise my self any advantage by her being private, as then, to my Mind: so as I had more Faith in her Prayers than in her Help, especially towards my retiring from the World, for parting with me would have been a great Obstacle.

Now, whilst my Mother was ignorant of the true Cause of my Trouble of Mind . . . she as I have said, acquainted my Father therewith, who by Letter desired me to let him know the Cause of so apparent a Discontent, that all the World did take notice of, and that it did much afflict my Mother, and considering how pleasant a Life I might lead if I would, he could not well imagine whence this Melancholly of mine should spring. Upon this Summons I rallied up my Forces, beseeching his Divine Majesty now to strengthen me and to give me the Courage to break the Ice, and let forth the Secret, that had lain so long in my perplexed Heart; and finding my self more than ordinary incouraged, and withal finding, as it were, that servile Fear and human Respect to vanish, that had held me so long back, I set Pen to Paper, and very resolutely told him; That seeing he did so earnestly command I would as ingenuously obey, assuring him that my Discontent, that all the World did wonder at, sprung from no other Source but that of a troubled Conscience, I being no longer able to conform to a Religion so erroneous as ye Protestant Religion was, which Discovery I had made by reading of Histories, which had informed me of the Antiquity of the Catholick Religion, which I did intend to embrace, and that it was the only Thing that could restore me to my former Peace of Mind, and I did add these resolute Words: 'That I was so fully resolved upon it that neither Fire nor Sword should alter my Mind.' And moreover, and besides I told him that I could not content my self with a Religion that was in England first promoted by that vicious King Henry the Eigth and that before His fall I found that History told me all England was Catholick, and that whilst he was good he did so defend the Catholick Faith as he received the Title of Ye Defender of the Faith from the See of Rome, and that if so be the Catholick Faith was once the True Faith it must needs be so still, our Blessed Saviour having promised his Church should never fail. These and many more Things I writ . . . which I did, I remember with more than an ordinary Vigour of Mind. Whilst I was expecting his Answer, my Mother was very earnest with me to let her know the Cause of my Discontent. Having discovered it to my Father I thought it now Time to discover it to her, knowing it would be News more welcome to her, of the two.

Having declared the real Cause to her, she was overjoyed she should have one Child that would be of her Religion. I acquainted her, at the same Time, with more than I imparted to my Father, for I told her the great Desire I had to retire from the World into some Monastery. She was then so ready to comply with me, as even to sell her Jewels, that I should have Help. I doubted not of her Goodness, but I was sure her Power would be soon restrained; for no sooner was my Father surprized with the Discovery I had made him, but I had a thundering Letter, wherein he wished he had not been so curious. It was sufficiently long, and all Invectives against the Catholick Church, and a great Vindication of his own Religion, discovering supposed Corruptions of the Roman Church. Many Conjurations I had, not to discover this my Conversion to the World, but to dissemble until his Return, and he would procure those that should satisfie my Doubts.

Upon this Letter a new war was raised in my Mind; my poor Conscience was again on the Rack, and torn several Ways. All my Father's Arguments delivered with sufficient Rhetorick, having naturally an excellent Expression with his Pen, and all being carried on, with ye Authority of a Father, who assaulted me both with sweet and sour, Threats and Intreatments.

Now on the other side my Mother encouraged me to stand to the Desire I had to imbrace her Religion. My Mind in this circumstances was in great Disturbance; for at first all my Father's Arguments did startle me, and the more because I had no-body to declare ye Doubts of my Mind unto, or to take Advice of; yet to condescend to my Father's Perswasions there was no Possibility, for Something there was that did repugn, and as if it were held me back, as often as I would make any offer to reconcile my self to ye Protestant Religion, and that was the only Thing I could do to regain my Father's Favour, which I saw I had wholly lost; and at the same Time that little Help, I hoped to have had from my Mother was by his Commands prohibited; for he fearing she should give me incouragement wrote to her, conjuring her by the Love she had for him (which he knew was not little) not to help me to any Books, nor give me any Help, and that at his Return he would satisfie me. This Conjuration put my good Mother into a great conflict of Mind, as she expressed by her Tears when she told me that she hoped that Almighty God would help and assist me, for she could only pray for me: and withal desired me not to think of going to any Monastery, or of doing any Thing until my Father's Return. I comforted her all I could, and did promise her to do Nothing that might make my Father take any Distaste at her, I only begged her Blessing and Prayers, and that I did not doubt but God would end the Work he had begun.

Now I did behold my self left all alone to fight this Battle I still with Tears and earnest Sighs imploring the Help of God, who never forsakes a constant Mind: I found he did strangely inwardly strengthen me.

I did now resolve to keep all my Intentions as secret as I could: I saw no Remedy but to dissemble until I could watch my Time, and Opportunity: I knew I had hard Cards to play; a tempting World to overcome, and surmount; and a cunning and subtle Father to deal withal. Amongst many things that he writ to me, one was this, to wit, that he did both command and desire me to dissemble my Intentions of being a Catholick to the Eyes of the World, until such Time as he should get me satisfied, as I have said.

I returned him for an Answer that seeing there was no Remedy, I would for his Sake dissemble upon Condition he would not force me any more to receive their Communion; he in his Return to me very willingly consented to that Request, adding that I was not fit, or capable of it, seeing I did doubt of the Truth of the Protestant Religion.

From this Time until my Father's Return from England, which was not very many Months after, I lived a dying Life with great Disturbances in Mind; . . . I earnestly longed for a Friend to take Counsel of and I found none I durst trust.

By Intervals when despairing of ever compassing my Desires I would try to the End to be quit of my Trouble of Mind, to strive to reconcile my self to the Protestant Religion, but it was impossible; I was still, as with a forcible Hand, drawn back again, and interiourly still more and more confirmed that none, but the Catholick Faith, was the Truth.

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By this Time it was known in our Family that I had declared to my Father that I would turn a Catholick: All did admire, I durst write to him in such resolute Terms considering in how great Awe I otherwise stood of him: But they were ignorant of the inward Strength and Courage I found my self fortified withal; at what Time soever I acted any Thing in Reference to my Conversion all Fear vanished. Every one had a greater Apprehension of my Father's Return, than my self; I was so far from dreading his coming Home, as I did long for it; for as I have said, What concerned my Conscience and Religion Almighty God with his preventing Grace did so fortifie me, as I feared him in that Point no more than a Stranger; although I was greatly in Awe of him in every Thing besides; for not one of his Children had he kept under the Curb, so much as he kept me in my Minority, as I have said, that made me admire I feared him so little on this Occasion; which was a Thing that I knew did so highly displease him; notwithstanding my Heart was prepared and Strengthened and the Fear of God overcame my natural Fear: And now I did so little apprehend seeing him, as I longed for his Coming. The Hour arriving he was no sooner entered the House, but I was the very first that met him to give him the Welcome, expressing more than a wonted joy at his Return; I chearfully begged his Blessing, but it was sooner craved than granted, for he with a severe Aspect seemed to over-look me; he only returned me a deaf Ear, and a dumb Mouth, but hastened to my Sister, and with more than ordinary Kindness embraced her. This being the least I could expect it did neither surprise me, nor daunt me, but looked on it as the Prologue to the Acts that were to follow, for there passed many several Scenes as you shall hear in the Sequel of this Discourse. . . .

Notwithstanding this foresaid Slight and Neglect of my offended Father, I was still very officious about him in being more ready at Hand, than ever, to serve him at every Turn; but I was still elbowed away, and none of my little Services accepted of; but my Sister still imployed and caressed on set purpose to gall me, as I perceived; but it did not work the Effect for which it was done; for Almighty God did so supply by giving me Joy, and Strength of Mind as I was very little sensible of my Father's Slights. . . .

This disdainful Manner of my Father lasted two or three Years, in which Time he gave me not a good Look, nor one ill Word; nor a good One I may say; for he rarely spoke to me; thinking doubtless by thus discountenanceing me to have tired me out, so as at last I should have been glad to have recanted; but by Nature I hated Unconstancy in my Undertakings, and much more in a Thing, on which my Salvation depended; but he was ignorant who it was that strengthened me; and upon whom it was that I did depend, whom I was resolved never to forsake; for I earnestly begged God daily in my prayers, to give me Opportunity to go where I might do nothing but Love, and serve him. . . .

Whilst my Father was thus mute, I was not idle, but began to cast about how and by what Means, I should bring to pass what I was now fully resolved upon; for I saw he sought only to tire me out, used no Means to satisfie me no Manner of Way. Because of my Promise I still went for Fashion's sake to Church with Him, which was my greatest Torment; yet I saw no Remedy; my only one was to dissemble my Resentments, and with my Father also, as artificially as he dissembled with me, until I could find an Opportunity to give him, and the World, the Slip, when they thought they had me most fast. . . .

I now made no Mention of Religion and dissembled all Trouble of Mind, was more sociable and chearful, insomuch as my Father began to think that the Storm of my Mind was blown over, and that by Degrees it would wear away; he began upon this to be cunningly kind, intermixing it with a Kind of Displeasure. I took all that came, with the same Countenance and whilst I seemed to do Nothing I did act most, and made in my Heart a firm Resolution not to rest plotting until I had found a Way to convey my self privately away to some Monastery; for I saw it was a Folly for me to hope if I stayed in the World, to have any Liberty of Conscience: and more over and above, I was weary of the World, and loathed all those Pleasures, that had charmed and deluded me so long.

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At this Time I was in a Protestant Family, went Weekly to Church against my Conscience; not a Creature, nor Priest to speak unto to encourage and advise me: would I resolve upon a Flight, I knew hardly whither or how, nor which Way to hope for a Person to settle me in a Monastery; and it was absurd to put my self on Strangers without a Maintenance: which Way soever I turned the Eye of my Mind, I saw nothing but a Labyrinth, Impossibilities, and Difficulties: notwithstanding I had not Power to give over the Pursuit, or reconcile myself to the World again, although all Manner of Pleasures did invite me: I was in a continual agitation of Mind . . . and on a Time when I was revolving in my Mind and Memory, that I had seen a Monastery of English Austin Nuns, some Nine Years before, when I lived in Flanders at Bruges, I did resolve to renew my Acquaintance by keeping Correspondence with the Superior thereof, and acquaint her with my Desires: I at last found a Way to convey a Letter to her, from whom I received a very Civil Return. This was some small Comfort, that I had at last One to ease my Mind unto. I found by her Lines she was a wise and discreet Woman* . . . Then she died and I continued my Correspondence with her Successoress. . . .

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* Mother Augustina Bedingfield. She was succeeded as Prioress by her niece, Mother Mary Bedingfield.

Now Things beginning to be settled in England, our Family was upon its Return to its native Country, and I began to cast about how in England, as well as here, I might continue this aforesaid Correspondence; and therefore I desired the Lady of the Monastery to direct me to some Catholick in whom I might safely confide for the Conveyance of my Letters to her. The Answer to this Letter, which directed me to an old Lady an Aunt of hers, did escape very narrowly my Father's Fingers, which if he had opened, all my Plot had been spoiled, and discovered, and I should have been in a worse Condition than ever, but Providence was more favourable than to permit it. And it happened thus.

Being abroad with my Father and Mother in a Coach, the Lacquey brought my Letter to the Coach, and presented it to my Father, and as God would have it, said that it came from Ghent; I hearing that Town named, knowing that my Letters came that Way and fancying that it might be mine, and seeing my Father going to take it, snatched it suddenly, and said 'its mine'; an Act in another Circumstance I durst not have done; and I admired that no Reproof followed: he only said from whom is the Letter? I answered, from one of my Companions; which he, contrary to his wonted strict Inquisitiveness, let pass, and took no further Notice of: But had he well observed the Discomposure of my Countenance, for I was in a kind of Fright, he might have seen that there was more than Ordinary in the Business.

I looked upon this Deliverance as a great Providence for the Interception of that Letter would have ruined my Designs.

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1661. In the Year 1661 of Our Lord all our Family was conveyed into England; a tedious and troublesome dangerous Journey it was: my Heart, God knows, sailed one Way whilst the Ship sailed another: all the Comfort I had, whilst I thus rowed against the Stream sprung from an inward Assurance I felt, I should be a Nun and end my Days in Religion; although, as Things stood then, morally speaking, nothing could seem more improbable, yea even impossible: and yet in ye midst of the Storm, when there was Danger to be cast away, the inward Assurance never forsook me; but I encouraged All not to fear; especially my Mother, who even despaired of ever more seeing Land: I desired her divers Times not to fear; and that I was confident we should not be lost; and I went still repeating to my self: ' I shall not be drowned and I shall be a Nun '; and was no more frightened at the rolling of the Ship than if I had been on firm Land. Towards Morning the Storm ceased, and the Mariners came, and told us in what imminent Danger we had been; and how near the Sands and added that a Thing happened that Night they had never seen before, since they had been at Sea, to wit, that when they were almost in despair fathoming the Water and found themselves so near the Sands, there came suddenly a strong Gale of a contrary Wind, than what they had had before, and blew the Ship from the Sands a League into the Sea, which if it had blown it as fast forward, it must have perished; and they themselves stood surprised at the Novelty.

This Deliverance confirmed my Assurance. I gave Almighty God Thanks. Behold here again the Hand of Providence to be admired.

Now being arrived at London, I gave myself hardly Leave to repose after so troublesome a Journey, before I was informing my self how I should find out the foresaid Lady, that I was directed unto, so as I might renew again my former Correspondence with the Lady of the Cloyster, which had now been for some Time interrupted, by Reason that having lain long expecting a Wind, and long at Sea, I could not possibly convey a Letter to her. But now it was not long before I found out the Lady's Lodgings: She having had Notice of me entertained me with much Civility: I never went to her but by Stealth, pretending to go to some other Place: There it was where I first of all spoke with any Priest, who confirmed me in the Faith and encouraged me in my Enterprise. This was some Comfort; but I durst not partake thereof too often, for Fear of being discovered. Every Week I found out a Way to carry, and fetch my Letters. At last not daring to go so often out my self, I did spy out a good honest simple Wench in the Place where I lodged, that I thought a fit Instrument for my Purpose: I by Gifts and Kindness made her my Creature and she very faithfully carried, and brought me my Letters.

Now the Fear I was in, that my Father would convey his Family into the Country, made me beg of Almighty God, that he would so dispose as my Father might take an House, and remain but one Year at London; from whence I knew it was easier to get, than out of the Country. My Prayers were heard, and I cannot tell on what Motive, he did remain at London just one year to my great Joy. . . .

Now to see how Things will fall out, and how Almighty God doth help them that simply trust in Him and have no other Help !

For most fortunately, the Back-Door of the House my Father had hired in Holbourn came out into a Street called Fetter-Lane, and There were lodged the two Jesuits, that I had just made Acquaintance withal; so as I could easily slip out to their Lodgings. . . . Still the Correspondence of the Lady of the Monastery and I, went on most prosperously, only once my Letters ran a great Hazard, which I will declare in its proper Place.

I had now dissembled with so much Art, that my Father was in great Hopes I was now to be wrought upon; though I was never further off it; He, to give a Tryal to his suppositions, spoke to the Bishop of Winchester to sound me, and to try if he could settle me in the Religion I was forsaking. My Mother informed me that there was such a Thing in Agitation; and that this pretended Bishop should come to use his Power to try to pervert me; for which his Lordship should have a Banquet for his Reward, which was already prepared. I was very glad to hear this News, and did assure my Mother, that I did not fear his Lordship, and that as I would order the Business, he should miss of his sweet Recompence, as well as of his Pretence.

Never after this did this Bishop come to our House, but I would be still at his Elbow; and often would my Mother say, ' Why will you be still where that Man is ?' To show him, Madam, replied I, that I am not afraid of him. I longed for the Combat, and, when the Time grew near he was to come, I, to hasten his Lordship into the Field, wrote to him, desiring him to make Haste. . . .

He returned me for Answer that he would wait on me as soon as he had been with his Majesty at St James's.

The Day after, my Lord came and called for me.* . . .

* It is not possible to fix the exact date of this interview, though it seems to have taken place in 1662. Brian Duppa (or De Uphaugh, according to Antony Wood), Bishop of Winchester, died on March 26 of that year, at the age of seventy. Charles I (whom he is said to have helped in the composition of the *Eikon Basilike*) had appointed him

It were too long to rehearse my Hour's Dispute I had with him. I shall only touch on some principal Passages.

Now he having blamed me for offering to forsake the Religion, my Father had brought me up in, I asked him, if there was no Salvation in the Catholick Church? He replyed (most learnedly, if you observe) that there was for such as were brought up in that Simplicity; but for One that had been taught and knew better Things, he much doubted, and it was dangerous. But I perfectly remember, that he spoke this so faintly, and with so little Vigour, just as a Man speaks, when he speaks against his Conscience; so as this startled me not at all. He demanded my Motives, why I should make a Change. I told him because I thought I could not be saved in the Protestant's Faith. He then told me that the protestant Church was conformable to the primitive Times, and that after the first sixth Hundred it was corrupted by the Superstitions brought in by several Popes; but the protestant Church was as a weeded Garden, and was a reformed Church, and free from Errours now. I replyed, that I found, that in the Gospel our Saviour promised, that the Church should never err, and that Hell Gates should never prevail against it. 'How is it then,' said I, 'is Man fain to reform, because God was not able to perform or keep his promise? This is strange; and moreover and above, it seems to me, if the Church can err, what Assurance can there be of any Salvation? It can as well lead me to Hell as to Heaven.' And at the same Time I told him, that that very Confession of the Protestant, 'That the Church could err' was the Thing that had made me forsake their Church: and because the Catholicks told me, their Church could not err, made me the more willing to embrace their Faith.

Then he alleged a whole Catalogue of Errours, speaking against the Belief of the Real Presence; praying to our Blessed Lady, the Saints: and several Ceremonies he condemned. To these points I having no Learning to insist upon them, and knowing, if I did, he would

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tutor to the future Charles II, whose lord almoner he became after the Restoration. He was succeeded by Bishop George Morley, best known as the friend and patron of Isaac Walton. His visit to St James's may have been in order to thank the King for his nomination. He is said to have held Calvinistic tenets. He was sixty-five in 1662, so that Catherine Holland's words: "He was ancient enough to have been my Grand Father" might apply to either of these Bishops.

quickly overthrow me, tho' not overcome me, by his Rhetorick, and Scholastical Queries, I simply told his Lordship; That, as for the Real Presence, I took the Words as they stood, and seeing it was our Lord's last Will, and Testament, and that the divine Mouth of Truth had itself said: 'This is my Flesh indeed, and this is my Blood indeed': it became me not to give our Lord the Lie, and say, it is not true, as the Protestants do: I thought it more just, and pious to submit my Judgment: and as for the other Things, he called Errours, and Superstitions, I thought it absurd for me to call in question what hath been approved and defined long since by an Universal Church, and confirmed by Councils: and withal that History did tell me that there was a Time when no Protestants were heard of; neither could it be called an Universal Church, as God's Church ought to be, and if I went out England, I could not go to Church. To this he made, I know not what insignificant Replies; That the Jesuits had put these Things in my Head; but he did wrong them.

Then I asked him where the Church of England was in Cromwell's Time? He told me it was still in Being, and that every One's Church was in their own Heart. I replied, between Jest and Earnest, I was not so artificial as to build Churches, and so I would go to One, that was a visible Church; to One, that was united; (for I could not find ten protestants of one Mind or Opinion) . . .

To all this his Lordship answered so faintly, and indifferently; and so little to the purpose, as it moved me not; but possibly his dry Answers sprung from a Disdain he had to dispute with a Girl, as I was in Comparison of him, who was ancient enough to have been my Grand father. In fine, after a long to and fro Dispute, and telling me still it was the Jesuits, that put these Things in my Head; although I had not had an Hour's Discourse with a Jesuit in my Life, nor hardly half an Hour, I may say, in Regard that my Excursions being by Stealth I durst not be so long absent from Home, and none durst come to me: yet it was the Jesuits, that had deluded me.

Now his Grace being weary took a quick Way to ease himself, and end the Dispute, sending me to study the Scriptures, saying somewhat earnestly: 'Come, Madam, take the Scriptures, and pray Almighty God to illuminate you; there is Truth to be found in them.

I thereupon replyed: ‘ Indeed my Lord I do believe, you do wish you had not made the Scriptures so common, for from thence has sprung up, by false interpreting the Scriptures, so many Heresies, and false Opinions, as are in England. He was a little mute upon this, and waved the Answer still persisting, that I should search the Scriptures. I told him that indeed I understood them not; because in many places they seemed to contradict themselves. Upon this Reply, his Lordship begun to be somewhat angry, and told me that it was a Blasphemy to say so. I replied: ‘ That in their true Sense, I knew they did not contradict themselves, but in the Literal Sense there was many Contradictions, I could not reconcile.’ ‘ Shew me,’ said he, raising his Voice, ‘ one Contradiction in the whole Bible.’

My Lord Bishop thought here to have posed his effeminate Defendant; but I, no whit daunted found out a very fit Piece of Scripture for his Purpose, at that Time, or rather Almighty God, who sometimes confounds the Wise by the Weak, found it for me; for just upon this pinch came into my Mind a place in the Proverbs of Salomon, that stopped my Lord’s Mouth; for, as I have said, pressing me to show him one Contradiction in Scripture, I will, Sir, shew you one presently; for ‘ pray, my Lord,’ said I, ‘ doth it not stand written in such a place in the proverbs, “ Answer not a Fool for Fear you partake of his Folly ?” And then in the very next Verse, doth it not stand; “ Yet answer him, for Fear he should seem wise in his own Eyes ?”

‘ Now my Lord,’ said I, ‘ am I to answer the Fool by Scripture, or not ? Is not this a plain Contradiction ? Answer not. Yet answer.’ Upon this he was like a Man struck dumb, and answered not one single Word, but did turn from me suddenly. Whether it was, that he thought I had called him Fool by Scripture, or to hide his Smile at the Piece of Scripture I had picked out, I know not, but without turning towards me he asked me where my Father was. I told him, I knew not, and bestowing a coy Court’sy on his Lordship for his pains, I left him, and my Father not being at Home his Lordship went away, as wise as he came, without the fine Banquet, that was prepared for him, as I had foretold.

I was informed afterwards, that the Bishop told my Father, there was no Good to be done with me, for

I was so obstinate, as if an Angel should have come from Heaven, and should tell me any Thing, but what I had got in my Head, he would not be able to prevail. And I do believe so too; if an Angel should speak no more to the purpose; nor have no more Zeal to gain a Soul, than his Lordship had.

1662. Now having through Almighty God's Goodness, passed thus happily, this Brunt, I begun with a new Vigour, and Courage to prosecute my Design, which I saw must be accomplished this year or never. I then dispatched away Letters to let the Lady of the Monastery, whither I intended to go know how Things stood with me. In the meanwhile I took Counsel of two Jesuits of my Acquaintance how to get away.

I did Weekly receive Letters in private.

One Danger more my Letters did escape, which a very great Providence did prevent, which I will, according to my Promise set down here, that it may be seen the Goodness Almighty God hath had for my poor Soul; his Name be ever blessed, and Glory increased. One Day, above the Rest, the foresaid Lady sent me a great Packet of Letters from such as were privy to my Business by a Lacquey of hers, that asked for the Wench, that always did receive them for me: She being out of the Way above in a Chamber smoothing of Linen, the Cook Maid was too lazy to call her, and did let the Boy stand expecting at the Door: it being hot Weather, and he weary sat down, and fell asleep with my Letters in his Hand. Here did divine Providence help out, for, as she did assure me, (she being a good ignorant simple Wench, but very faithful) she all on the sudden had such a Propension to go down, as she had no Power to go on wth her Work; down she must go; though she knew neither why, nor wherefore: at last down she went, and then her Fellow-Servant told her that there was a Boy at the Door would speak with her. She went and found the Youth fast asleep with my Letters in his Hand: she taking them, and sending the Boy away, came and brought them to me, and told me what a Hazard they had run, and how lucky a Thing it was she went down just at the Nick of Time; for, said she, I had no sooner taken the Letters from the Boy, but your Father came with several Gentlemen out of the Parlour to go abroad, and so might have seized on your Letters. I blessed Almighty God for this great Deliverance, for had my Father intercepted those

Letters, I had quickly have been secured from getting away. . . .

1663. As the Time grew shorter, so my Care grew greater, and Difficulties did encrease. I was constrained to act two several Parts. To wit, To obey God's Call and also to seem to comply with the World, and seem Nothing less than what I was.

I kept the World in Play;
Whilst God I did obey.

Thus I acted the Part of a Counterfeit Protestant, and vain Worldling; for I went to Church the very Day before I came away, and this to prevent all Suspicions: I followed the Modes, and talked of Nothing but Vanities, to cheat the Rest of the World. But at the same Time, I did write private Letters to the Monastery to desire them to send One over to fetch me. The Thirty Pound a year, that was allowed me for my Maintenance, I laid up, to travel withal. I consulted with such, as were privy to my Designs, which was only one Lady, and two Jesuits; which Fathers were very zealous in my cause, until they were prohibited by a timorous Provincial* of theirs, who commanded them on Obedience not to meddle with my Concerns; and This, because my Father was a politick Man, and a leading Man in the Parliament House, he feared that, if so be he should find out, that it was the Jesuits, that did help to convey away his Daughter, he might bring them into Trouble: but he was more afraid than hurt.

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* This Provincial, whom Catherine Holland spares as little as she had spared the Protestant Bishop of Winchester, was Father Edward Leedes alias Courtenay. He was son to Sir Thomas Leedes of Wappingthorn, Sussex, and one of his sisters, Mary, was professed among the Canonesses at Louvain. What we know of Father Leedes does not at all bear out the character for "timorousness" which Catherine ascribes to him. He had been arrested in 1635 for writing "A Discourse against the oath of allegiance" (an oath about which there was some controversy, the Benedictines allowing it while the Jesuits disapproved of it), and was over half a year confined in the Gatehouse prison. Charles I was greatly offended by the "Discourse," which was qualified as "bold and seditious." Father Leedes wrote from his prison to the Secretary of State, asking to know what the King required of him, but stating that "If itt be the prejudice of the essential and necessary dutie of my religion, I shall patiently and meekly submitt my life and bodye to his Maties greatest severitie." He was released on a promise to meddle no more with matters of controversy and went over to the Continent, where he was successively Rector of several English Colleges. From 1664 to 1667 he was Rector at Liège, and it was no doubt then that he went to visit Sister Catherine Holland at Bruges. He is said to have united prudence to virtue and to have been noted for zeal and charity as a missionary. He died in 1667. (See Gillow's *Dictionary of English Catholics* and Foley's *Records*, Series I, pp. 251-268.)

I being ignorant of this Command, and thinking to find Help now at my last pinch, found myself again left to shift for myself; for coming one Day, as I was wont, to the Lodgings of one of these Fathers, I found him very sad, and spoke not, as he used to do. I marvelled at his Change; but at last very unwillingly he told me, he must forsake me, for he had a Command from his Provincial, not to meddle with my Business; and that indeed it was a Business somewhat dangerous, considering who my Father was; and withal added; that I should do well to desist, and stay till my Father was better minded or dead; and therefore he would advise me to convey my Cloaths, and Things back again, which I had been six Weeks stealing out of our House, and had used many Fallacies and Arts to get them.

This was most surprising News and at first startled me and strook me even into Tears: I was even struck dumb for a while; but at last recovering my self, I broke Silence, and said, with more than an usual Courage, 'Well if Man will not help me, I am sure God will; I can not undo what I have done; I will go, though I should wade through the Ocean.' He admired to see me so resolute, and replyed; 'I think thou are more than a Woman'; and bid me do in God's Name what I would; but he could only pray for me. I then desired him to let me know where this cautious Provincial was, for I was resolved to let him know my Mind, were it but to ease it, for methoughts This was a strange Command at such a Nick of Time, and did speak little Zeal of Souls, and did not much edifie me. He then bid me write, for he was as much troubled at the Provincial as my self. As soon as I was returned Home I set Pen to Paper, and in my Anger writ him a sufficient long tart Letter; and amongst other Things I did ask him, if his Reverence did think that his holy Father St Ignatius, or St Francis, or any of the former Saints, would have, by so strange a Command as he had imposed upon his Subjects, have left a Soul in so great Danger, as he had made his leave mine: and this through a little Fear and human Respect? Yet Notwithstanding it should not discourage me, for go I would; and although Men forsook me, God would not. Several Things of this Nature did I fill my Letter withal, for the Satisfaction of my own Mind not a little troubled at him; and this, although he was a mere Stranger to me. But self Interest and Timorosity made him redouble his Commands saying I had Courage enough to do it alone; and why should they hazard themselves? Yet when the Fear of his own Danger was over, he afterwards came to the Monastery, and made his late Apology, and told me, indeed my Lines made him weep; though not to take Compassion. But Almighty God would have it thus, to make the Work his own.

Now thus being entirely left to my self by Man, I felt my Courage, and Desire redoubled; my whole hope was in the Help of God, who forsook me not. I did receive a Letter from the Lady of the Monastery to come with all Speed, and that she would receive me with open Arms. Here the Heavens opened and I revived with new Hopes of good Success.

All this Time I could not get so much spare Time, as to reconcile my self, before I went to Sea; neither, to speak a litteral Truth, was I very solicitous about it; for Confession I did much dread: nothing could I think of, but getting to the Monastery.

By this Time the Person, that was to fetch me, was come to Town; and I appointed her to meet me at a certain Place. Here had I like to have had another Stop; for when I did meet her, I found her in a strange Perplexity about taking me with her: some one of those that were privy to my Business, which were only four Persons, for I let as few know of it as possible, had scared her, telling her that she should take Heed what she did; that she should remember whose Daughter I was; and that if ever my Father should find out that it was she, that conveyed me away, he might put her in Trouble; and that she should never dare to set her Foot in England again; so as she, in a Manner, refused to take me being now ready the next Day to go with her. This was another Stratagem of the Devil to discourage me; but it took no Effect; for I found a Charm that banished all her Fears; I told her that there was no Fear it would ever be known, who carried me over; and that I was certain Almighty God would protect us, and bring us safe; but I had a Conceit that her greatest Apprehension, and Fright was, who should pay her for her Pains; so as to remove this Obstacle, I flung into her Lap seven

Pound, without bargaining with her, and told her, if she would bring me safe to the Monastery I would demand of her Nothing else.

This golden Cordial revived her fainting Spirits, and then she most courageously told me; That seeing I had so much Courage, she would have no less. Then she took my Trunk and conveyed it before, and appointed me to meet her the next Morning about eight of the Clock in the same Place. This being concluded of, I returned Home very thoughtful of what I was about to undertake: many great Combats I had that Day; and the next Night not being able to sleep one Wink. The Night before I went away, my Mother bid me put on my best Apparel to go a visiting the next Day: I thought to my self, I have a Visit to make you know little of.

I rose the next Morning betimes, and went to my Prayers a good while; Then I went to my Mother's Chamber, and stood and discoursed with her for a while, who wondered to see me so early up, and with her, which was very unusual with me. In going out I sighed, for my Heart was full: I begged her Blessing, and thought in my Heart; 'Dear Mother you little think you shall see me no more.' Now as if divine Providence would give me free Passage, this very Week my Father, Uncle, Brother and Cousin, were gone into the Country: so as I feared not to be pursued: but ye Coast being clear, and I finding my Mind and Heart replenished with more than a wonted Vigour and Courage went to my Closet, and writ two Letters, the one to my Father to beg his Blessing and Pardon for my going away without his Knowledge, telling that Nothing but the Love of God, and Liberty of Conscience should ever have made me separate my self from his Obedience; and withal desired him not to lay my Departure to my Mother's Charge for it was as great a Secret to her, as to himself. In the Letter, I writ to my Mother, who I knew would be overwhelmed with Sorrow to part with me, and on the other Side, no less joyed to have one Child a Catholick, and Religious, I comforted her by telling her how happy I should be in the Place I was going to, acquainting her with my Intentions of being Religious.

These Letters I sealed, and laid them upon my Table. I put my Hoods and Scarfs in my Coat, and taking a Book in my Hand, I went as if I was going to walk in the Garden: I met only with the Maid, that had so faithfully carried my Letters; I gave her then a Reward, though she did little think it would be the last Time she ever would see me.

As soon as the Coast was clear, I slipped out at the back Gate to meet my Conductress at an appointed Place hard by. At my going from my Father's House I did not shed a Tear, but I trembled; and although Nature was upon the Rack, I found myself inwardly encouraged, and strengthened . . .

My Conductress, Mrs Fosset, stood ready in the Place I had appointed her to meet me: My Trunk being gone before I took the Canterbury Waggon, refusing the Coach in Regard I feared that if so be I was followed and sought after, they would sooner examine a Coach.

In the Way I was extreme chearful; I found methought my Mind at Liberty now. Mrs Fosset seeing me so merry admired and said: 'How can you be so chearful considering how troubled and sad your Parents are for your secret Departure?' I replied: 'My going away will be but a nine Days' wonder; I suffered more in living so long constrained in Conscience.'

And in Reality I found my Mind and Heart so joyful, as I apprehended no misfortune; in so much as when I stood by the Sea Side, I thought if there had been no ship to convey me over the Sea, I durst have ventured to have gone over in a Pair of Oars or a Cock-Boat; such a Confidence had I in God.

Being arrived safe at Dover, there I was examined what my name was; I told them Catherine Brown, and by that name I was registered in the Book. I did change my Name for fear of being discovered; and in effect there were several Gentlemen, that went over at the same Time, that knew very well our Family: but thus I passed incognita until I came safe to the Journey's End. The next Day I took the Packet Boat, and in twenty four Hours I was wafted over, and arrived in Flanders, and so came at last at my desired Haven, that was to the Monastery of the Austin Nuns, where I received a very kind Welcome by the Superior thereof, who was the Niece of Reverend Mother Augustina Bedingfield, with whom I had begun to correspond; but she died before I could compass my Design; so I was accepted with much Charity and Goodness; for they were not certain if they should ever have a penny with me, by Reason my Father was so highly offended with me for going away without his Leave, and for changing my Religion: But still I had a great Confidence in that divine Providence that had led me on all the Way, that he would so order Things, as to enable me to settle in the State of Life, he had chosen for me, to which I was come even, as I may say, blindfold; for I was as ignorant as a Child, what a Religious Life was, and what would be required at my Hands: I went on bona Fide, and doubted not but to be able to do what I saw others do.

This looks according to human Prudence, to be great Rashness and Temerity, for I never enquired if the Cloyster was rich or poor; but still followed my interior Impulse in embracing this new Manner of Life, and I was not frustrated of the Hopes I had to find the Happiness I proposed to myself; which I shall give to understand in its proper Place; but now I will conclude this Narration with declaring the good Success I had to obtain Means to settle here, where I am at present; and what a Surprize our Family was in, when I was missing, which was about Dinner Time, to which being called I was not found: Servants were sent about to all that knew me, but none could give any account of me. It was judged by all I was run away with some Gallant; for going to be a Nun and to leave the World, it was the least of their Thoughts; none of the exterior Measures I took, could raise the least Suspicion of any such Things; which Acts were all Disguises to amuse those that would have hindered me; for the nearer the Time of taking my Flight, the more vain I seemed both in Words, and Apparel; in so much as some Times I was chid for patching my Face and going so gay; but I was inwardly pleased to see their Mistake.

The Lady* that helped me in my Exploit (she was Aunt to the Reverend Mother and afterwards, her husband dying, came to be a Nun in the same Monastery with me) related to me the great confusion our Family was in, when they did miss me until they found the two Letters, I left upon my Table in my Closet, which informed them whither I was gone. Many a Letter was sent after me especially by my Father who was not a little surprised and displeased; he did blame me for so rash an Action, and Disobedience to steal away without his Leave. I told him in my Answer to his, that a Thing that had been above three Years in Agitation, could not be looked upon as rash: That I did beg his Pardon and that I was not able any longer to go against my Conscience; and that I did hope now I was here, he would give me leave to settle in this State of Life. He answered me saying that if I would come back he would give me Liberty of Conscience: but it was ye last of my thoughts to try. I then, by my next Letter, desired him to give me his Pardon under his own Hand; for as yet he had not pardoned me, but still concluded his Letters with stiling himself, Yr afflicted Father J. H. . . .

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* Lady Hamilton, who became Sister Augustina, taking the name which had been that of her sister, Mother Augustina Bedingfield.

After this foresaid Letter he never writ to me more: but he would receive mine; and now and then, when I demanded it, send me Token, after the Death of my honoured dear Mother, who was joyed she had one Child of her own Religion, and was very kind; but when Death deprived me of her, I was a Stranger to all the rest of my Kindred; which I was very well satisfied withal, seeing it was for Almighty God's sake; for whose Sake I had forsaken them all. And to the End to be able to settle my self in Religion, I addressed my self to a great friend of my Father's, which was the Duke of Norfolk, Henry Howard. He being a very good Catholick, and understanding how the Case stood between me, and my Father, took the Business in Hand to procure me a Portion to the End to be professed. He then did me the Honour as to adopt me his Daughter, and told my Father; that if so be, he would not give me a Portion, he himself would give me One. My Father did reply that I had forsaken him, and strayed from his Obedience, and that consequently I did not merit a Portion, nor could demand none. But when he saw the Duke so earnest, he said, he would not give me any portion, only in Regard he would not consent any one else should maintain any of his Children, seeing he was able to do it himself; he would send an Alms to the Monastery that they might not be burdened with me; and then by the Hand of the same Duke sent four Hundred Pounds, three weeks after my Noviceship was ended. I did not care what he called what he sent, a Portion or Alms; I was sufficiently joyed it enabled me to make my Profession.

The happy day of my settlement being come, which was the 7th of September 1664, the Duke came to my Profession, and so gave me, instead of my Father to God, and was ever after most obliging.

By this means I was settled, after a great deal of trouble, in the State of Life I had so long desired: in the which I live truly content, and no little satisfaction of Mind it was to me; I was out of danger of ever being in the Slavery of Marriage for which I had so great an aversion, and there was no other Way to avoid it, but in embracing the State of Religion. In several remarkable Occasions did Almighty God Manifest his Goodness to me in bringing me with Courage through many great Tryals inward and outward, all which never raised in me the least Repentance; for the Acts of Religion were very contrary to what I had been accustomed for above twenty five Years before. Infinite was the Goodness of God towards me; for he caused all things to conclude for my Advantage; whilst I did only Desire his Holy Will might be done to his own Glory, for whose sake I had forsaken all the Pleasures of the World and embraced this mortifying Life rather then one more easy to Nature."

To Sister Catherine Holland's account we will add only the brief entries regarding her found in the Bruges Annals and in the foreword to her MS.:

"The year 1662. In August Mrs Catherine Holland came out of England to our Monastery, where she was reconciled, and received the Scholar's habit wth much joy and satisfaction, we relying upon her honorable mother for her maintenance.

The year 1663. In July Sister Catherine Holland was clothed, her Mother the Lady Sands paying the charges of her habit.

The year 1664. The 7th of September Str. Catherine Holland made her Profession. Her Father was prevailed with to pay her portion by the right honorable the Lord Henry Howard* who was present at her Profession and dined in our Father's house.

The year 1720. On the 6th of January departed out of this life about 9 o'clock in the morning Sister Catherine Holland. She had experienced God's special grace and wonderful providence in her conversion to the true Faith, the history of whch she has left written in her own hand, being engaged to do it by the express order of her spiritual director, and she has therein most humbly and sincerely expressed her grateful sentiments of the Divine Goodness, particularly for her conversion and vocation to the Religious Life. In both she faithfully concurred to the divine grace, tho' being of a high spirit and quick wit she had much to overcome in her nature, and the struggle between nature and grace was sometimes very apparent. 'Twas also very edifying to see the victories whch grace gained over natural humour and inclinations, which gave her the occasions of practising heroic virtues. For this end when she feared her humours would surmount her reason and influence her conduct she would say ' Come Kate along with me ' then went and took a discipline. Her conversation was pleasant and diverting wth her merry conceits and jeasts; her genius for poetry was also an innocent subject for diversion, but that whch made more to her advantage was, that she so well employed her pen as to perpetuate her pious memory in this community by several pious books and Saints' lives whch she translated from French and Dutch into English. About four months before her death she had frequent fits of ague of which she recovered so well between times that we often hoped the worst was past till her fits renewed again, wch were very severe, and tho' her courage always surpassed the strength of her little body, yet her weakness and great age assaulted by an intermittent feavour could no longer resist. She was four days confined to her bed, and on the Epiphany Eve received the last Sacraments wth great devotion and submission to God's Will. She had her perfect senses to the last moment, being heard to pronounce the Sacred Name of Jesus with her last breath. She was 85 years of age* and in the 56th of her holy Profession. She was buried on the 8th of January. Requiescat in pace. Amen.

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* Sister Catherine Holland speaks of him as Duke of Norfolk. In 1667 he succeeded his brother Thomas (fifth Duke), to whom the Dukedom had been restored by Act of Parliament in 1660.

If grace does not destroy nature, but only gives light to discover and strength to overcome its weakness, Sister Catherine Holland so co-operated with it as to give us reason to say that she made such use of hers as to glorify God, sanctify her own soul and edify all."

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* This is incorrect, for the registry of Baptism at Quidenham gives 1637 as the date of her birth.

Lady Lucy Herbert

Lady Nithsdale

Lady Montagu

Queen Mary of Modena

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VIII

FROM COURT TO CLOISTER

THE era of the Martyrs had just closed* when, in 1692, Lady Lucy Herbert entered the Bruges Community; but both her father and mother had been imprisoned during the popular agitation, or rather frenzy, caused by the Titus Oates Plot. The Plot is now acknowledged to have been " a thing devised by the enemy " for the purpose of incriminating the leading Catholics of England, among whom William Herbert, Lord Powis, was one of the most prominent.

In 1678 he was impeached with Lord Stafford (father of Sister Ursula Stafford) and the Lords Arundel of Wardour, Belasyse, and Petre. Lord Stafford was the first to be tried and the only one to win the crown of martyrdom, for the trial of the others was adjourned; Lord Petre died in prison, a confessor of the Faith, and the three other Peers were released after more than five years' confinement in the Tower.

Lady Powis (Elizabeth, daughter of Edward Somerset, second Marquis of Worcester†), was also committed to prison, but was released the following year. She and other Ladies formed a society for relieving the wants of Catholics imprisoned for their Faith. Thus the mother of a Prioress, who died so late as 1744, fulfilled towards the last victims of the English religious persecutions that same ministry of charity which Margaret Clement had rendered, at such fearful risk, to the early martyrs under Henry VIII.

Venerable Oliver Plunket, writing from his prison about this time, says: " The English Catholics were here most charitable to me; they spared neither money nor gold to relieve me, and in my trial did all for me that even my brother would do. They are rare Catholics, and most constant sufferers."

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* The last martyr executed in England was Blessed Oliver Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, who suffered at Tyburn in 1681, a victim of the Titus Oates Plot.

† Author of a *Century of Inventions* (published in 1663), in which he describes an engine of his own invention by which water could be raised by steam.

James II showed himself anxious to make some compensation to Lord and Lady Powis for the injustice they had sustained at the hands of his brother.* Lord Powis was created Marquis of Powis, and his wife was appointed Governess to the Prince of Wales, at whose birth she had assisted. In 1688 she accompanied Mary of Modena in her flight to France, accomplished by the aid of the Count de Lauzun, the Queen being disguised as a washerwoman, and the infant charge of Lady Powis representing a bundle of linen! At Saint Germains-en-Laye the titles of Marquis of Montgomery and Duke of Powis were conferred on Lord Powis, who became also lord steward and chamberlain of the royal household.

The palace assigned by Louis XIV to James II and his Queen "was full of the young families of their attendants, who, having forsaken houses and lands for their sakes, had now no other home. There were little Middletons, Hays, Dillons, Bourkes, Stricklands, Plowdens, Staffords, Sheldons, and many of the children of their Protestant followers also . . . forming a mimic court and body-guard for the little prince, whose playmates they were."†

But Lucy and Winefred Herbert, the two youngest of the five daughters of the Duke and Duchess of Powis, were of an age to assist at the state visits, the dinners and hunting parties, the plays at St Cyr, and other festivities by which "le grand Monarque" showed his desire to do honour to the exiled royalty of England, festivities to which they must have carried heavy hearts.

It was at St Germains that Lady Winefred first met William Maxwell, Earl of Nithsdale, whom she married in 1699.

Lady Lucy seems never to have entertained the thought of marriage. The vicissitudes of fortune which she had witnessed from her childhood were calculated to increase a natural seriousness of disposition, and she realised the pettiness of the jealousies, resulting in childish quarrels for precedence, which were rife among the exiles—and, indeed, in the French Court also. Her mind was attuned to higher things, and she longed to give her undivided service* to Him Whose voice she heard assuring her "that He was all hers, and asking her when she would be all His." "Nothing hinders Him from being all ours," she exclaims, "neither Heaven, nor His Divinity, nor the gibbet of the Cross. What, then, can hinder us from being all His? Let us resolve that for the future nothing shall, saying from the bottom of our hearts, 'My Lord and my God, since you are pleased to be all mine, I desire the grace to be entirely yours. And whose should I be but my Creator's and my Redeemer's, who has so many rights over me, and to whom I totally owe myself?'"†

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* "On Saturday the King was pleased to send to my Lord Powis to let him know he had the sword the Pope sent king Hary the eight and that he should have the honour to carry it before him on ister day, for the sword as was carryed before the late king is laid aside" (*Memoirs of the Verney Family*, vol. ii, p. 393).

† Miss Strickland's *Queens of England*, vol. v, p. 145.

Her spiritual director, during the three years she spent in France, was Father Louis Sabran, S.J. He had been connected for a long time with the Court of St James, to which his father, the Marquis de Sabran de Saint Elzear, was ambassador during the reigns of Charles II and James II. In 1688 Father de Sabran was appointed chaplain to the infant Prince of Wales, and, escaping at peril of his life, rejoined the Court at St Germains.

He encouraged Lucy Herbert's desire for the religious life, but left her full freedom as to the choice of an Order, and she studied the Rules and Constitutions of most of the English Foundations in France and Belgium, and visited many of them. It appears that in some she was treated with a good deal of ceremony as "a lady of Quality," but the simple cordiality with which she was received at Bruges won her heart, and she declared that "this was the house of her choice."

Her decision was not approved of by her family; they did not wish her to embrace the religious state, but if she were determined to do so, they would have preferred her to enter a convent in France, so that they could have easy access to her. Queen Mary Beatrice, who so often found help and consolation in the Monastery of Chaillot, would probably have wished her to join the Order of the Visitation. It was objected that Bruges was "in the enemy's country," for at this time (1692) Spain had entered the coalition formed by William III against Louis XIV, who was planning an invasion of England in favour of James II.

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* "Ung je serviray," was the motto of the Herberts of Powis.

† See Lady Lucy's Devotions, *Reflections for the Unitive Way*, p. 432. Edited by Father John Morris, S.J. (Burns and Oates).

Moreover, Lady Lucy knew no one in the English Convent, "but this," says the Chronicler, "proved a new motive to one that desired to leave the world entirely, and, if possible, to be forgotten by it." Thus through the ages the same chord vibrates in the hearts of those whom the love of Jesus has touched and taken captive. The desire "to be unknown and reputed as nothing" which led the old Flemish mystics to the solitude of the forest of Soignes and filled the mind of the lowly Brother of Mount St Agnes, now drew this girl, brought up in the atmosphere of courts, to the quiet Cloister where the traditions of Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis were held as a most precious heritage.

The annals thus record Lady Lucy's arrival at Bruges: "On February 2, 1692, came the Lady Lucy Herbert, daughter to William, Duke of Powis, Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's household. . . . Her very earnest zeal to be with us made her not so much as stay for a tolerable season, or Spanish pass, but without either, in the midst of a most severe and snowy winter, she happily arrived here, conducted by Father Lewis Sabran, of the Society of Jesus, the Queen's chaplain (and this by her Majesty's orders) and attended only by her woman and Mrs. Mary Burton, who also came to be a religious. My Lord Bishop came to visit the lady as soon as he knew of her being come to town."

During the first weeks after her entrance she underwent those temptations which so commonly assail souls who have resolved "to follow Jesus to the drinking of the Cup of His Passion and to the ignominy of His Cross."* In her trouble she wrote to Father Sabran, who answered her by a letter, still preserved at Bruges, dated from Paris on Good Friday, 1692; in it he gave her advice which was to become the ruling principle of her religious life, and which she was to teach later on to those under her care.

"All God requires of you," writes her director, "is to seek, desire, will, endeavour but one thing, to wit: that *His Will be done in and by you*. Do not concern yourself what grace, virtue, prayer, presence of God, success in your employment to His honour, you have: desire not to have anything, even of virtue, but as far as it is His will to put it in you; nor to do anything for

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* *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, chap. xi.

His glory or the good of others, but what He shall be pleased to do by you. Be only concerned for one thing—viz., a peaceful submission to all He permits to happen to you, an undisturbed indifference for all vexations, fears, grief, desires, haste, concern—which arise but from an unmortified selfishness and the hidden vanity of self-love.

" Adore in all God's Will and pleasure, and whatever happens rejoice; 'tis just to fulfil it. Adore it with joy in everything; that will make you a child of Providence, ever content with what so fatherly a love allows you, and concerned only to be faithful to what He so evidently shows is His Will. Let this be your whole practice and this alone: to glorify His Will in all things and to make it your own by a joyful submission.

" All trouble, haste, repining comes from corrupted nature; all desires that things or persons be otherwise than they are come from self-judgment and self-love . . . what is all that to us? Let God have His Will; He is infinitely wise and good, and would cease to be so if your desires or fancies, tho' the most virtuous, were to be His rule.

" That without which you cannot serve God is peace of mind and indifference to all which happens; this must be preserved whatever else is lost. Is not the love of God enough? and is there any other sure practice of it but a contented submission to His Will?

" Do that Will always, but never in haste, never with trouble, much less with any bitterness. It is He must do the work Himself, all you add of yourself, besides an easy peaceable submission, spoils it."

On March 1 she received the " scholar's " habit, taking the name of Sister Teresa Joseph, while Mary Burton added to her baptismal name that of Alexia.

It may be of interest to glance at the novices and " the younger sort " among the nuns at the time of Lady Lucy's entrance. Though she knew none of them personally, she found among them many whose relatives, like her own, had suffered for the cause of God and King.

There was Sister Frances Rookwood,* whose brother, Ambrose, had followed the Court to St Germains, and must have been well known to the Powis family. In 1696, at the age of thirty-one, he was executed at Tyburn for his fidelity to James II, being accused of complicity in the Barclay Plot. There was also Sister Xaveria Berington, grand-niece to the gallant old Cavalier, Sir Basil Brooke, and Sister Anne Markham, whose grandfather, Henry Neville, fell fighting for the King near Gainsborough; Sister Helen Andrews was daughter of Sir William Andrews of Dinton (Northamptonshire), whose brothers had been killed at the battle of Worcester. Sister Mary Widdrington was daughter to Ralph Widdrington of Cheeseburn Grange, a scion of the race whose name has been familiar since the days of the "gallant squier" who

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* Sister Frances was daughter of Ambrose Rookwood of Coldham Hall. Queen Elizabeth had once " honoured " Edward Rookwood, the owner of Euston Hall in Suffolk, by a visit to his house. She treated him as she had treated John Gifford on a like occasion, for she called him "her gentle Rookwood," and before her departure ad-

> "When both hys legges wear hewyne in to
> Yet knyled and fought on hys kne."

The annals tell us that "she was more inclined to the part of Mary than of Martha," and that "she was beloved by all for their great esteem of her sanctity. Her darling virtue was charity, in which she was so nice that during nearly fifty years spent in religion she was never heard to say the least slighting word or reflection on anyone. When at prayer she seemed perfectly united to God, remaining immovable, and, as it were, absorbed in Him. Her thoughts were taken up with God and heavenly things, and had no room for earthly objects."

Among the white-veiled novices was Sister Victoria Canning, niece to Father Busby, S.J., condemned to death at the Derby Assizes in 1681, who had only escaped execution in virtue of a royal pardon. The eldest in the Noviceship was Sister Mary Teresa Vaughan, already four years professed, though she was but twenty;

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mitted him to her presence, and, says Topcliffe in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, "gave him her fayre hand to kysse. . . . But my Lo. Chamberlayn, nobly and gravely understandinge that Rookwoode was excommunicated for papistrye, cawled him before him; demanded of him how he durst presume to attempt her reall presence, he unfyt to accompanye any Christyan person; forthwith sayd he was fytter for a payre of stocks; comanded him out of coort . . . and at Norwyche he was committed." What Edward Rookwood must have found harder to bear than the abuse of the Lord Chamberlain was the burning, in Elizabeth's presence and amid ribald jests, of a beautiful statue of our Lady, found in his house. He died in gaol and Euston Hall was forfeited to the Crown. (See Foley's *Records*, vol. iii, pp. 785-789.)

she died a few weeks after Lady Lucy had entered, "a great lover of poverty, exact in Obedience, and, having from the first beginning aspired to the perfection of the religious state, was made perfect in a short space." Sister Alexia Burton, who took the habit with Lady Lucy, was sister to Mother Mary Xaveria of the Angels, Prioress of the Carmelites at Antwerp, who died some years before her in great repute of sanctity. "As her family was remarkable for piety and goodness,"* say the annals, "so our dear Sister Alexia did not degenerate. From the beginning of her noviceship till the end of her life she still aimed at the highest perfection, never thinking she had attained the least."

A few weeks before the entrance of Lady Lucy there had arrived one whose coming must have delighted Sister Catherine Holland, now an elderly nun. This was none other than the daughter of her old friend, Henry, Duke of Norfolk.

The manner in which Lady Anne Howard's entrance was effected must have startled the nuns considerably, for one day after dinner, when they went as usual to finish Grace in the Choir, they found that "she had got into the enclosure by the communicating door" (which seems to show some negligence on the part of the sacristan). The young girl explained that she had been sent overseas to enter religion with Mrs. d'Ognati,† who had orders from the Duchess to place her in another of the English Foundations, but she had stolen away in order to seek admittance into the Cloister of Nazareth, where she earnestly desired to be received.

The nuns insisted on her writing to her mother, refusing to accept her without the consent of the Duchess; they also consulted the Community to which she had been destined, and all appearing satisfactory, Lady Anne Howard became Sister Anne Dominic.

It was only after her profession that the sad truth was known "that she had embraced a religious life, not from choice, but for the will of her mother whom she feared, which, if it had been known, she never would have been admitted."

The case is unique in the annals, and we cannot be astonished to hear that the austerity of the life and especially the Divine Office, round which it centres, were burdensome to her. There seems to have been no thought of instituting a canonical examination as to the validity of her vows, but Superiors treated the poor troubled soul with infinite patience and charity . . . and at the end there was consolation, for some time before her death, in 1734, she told one of the nuns "that she did not now repent of being a religious, and if it were again to do, it should be of her own free choice," and she died in great peace, having endured acute suffering with admirable patience. But we are anticipating.

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* Her grandfather, Henry Burton, died in prison, a confessor of the Faith. Her father, Thomas Burton (of Barton, near Bury), made his vows as a Jesuit on his deathbed. The life of Mother Xaveria was edited by Father Coleridge, S.J., in 1876.

† Marc Albert d'Ognati was Spanish ambassador at the Court of St James and was knighted by Charles II.

Both Lady Lucy Herbert and Lady Anne Howard are mentioned in letters from the Duke of Perth,[*] who visited the Convent in 1694. He writes as follows from Antwerp:

"*Sept.* 17, 1694.

"I was interrupted at Ghent, and since that time I have been in a continual Hurry, but I'll begine where I left. Next day we went by the tract-scout (a boat drawn by two horses which carries 60 to 70 persons conveniently) to Brugges. The canal is made by art, that is, it is a cutt way through the country filled with water from some little brooks, it is eight leagues I guess. Att Brugges (which is as melancholy a town as Ghent is cheerfull) we went and saw the Augustine English Nuns, and particularly my lady Anne Howard, half-sister to the Duchess of Gordon.[†] . . . My lady Anne Howard is a most excellent lady; at their house we heard Compline sung in musick very finely (for they have excellent musicians among them) and the nuns treated us at their grate with a fine collation of milks, fruits, and sweetmeats; within sat the presiding mother,[‡] Lady Anne Howard and Lady Lucy Herbert, daughter of the Duke of Powis, and talked with us while we eat; Lady Lucy is a most excellent religieuse."

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[*] James Drummond, Earl of Perth. (The title of Duke was conferred by James II at St Germains.) His letters to his sister, the Countess of Errol, from which we quote, were published in 1845 by the Camden Society, pp. 42-44.

[†] First cousin to Lady Lucy. The Duke of Norfolk married Lady Anne Somerset, sister to the Marchioness of Powis, and mother of Elizabeth, who became Duchess of Gordon. The ladies Catherine and Anne Howard were the daughters of Jane Bickerton, whom the Duke of Norfolk had married after the death of his first wife; Lady Catherine entered the English Benedictine foundation at Ghent.

[‡] Mother Mary Wright, who had succeeded Mother Mary Bedingfield.

The Duke of Perth had been converted by reading Bossuet's *Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique*. He became a fervent Catholic, and his correspondence with the great Bishop of Meaux, who held him in high esteem, shows both his zeal and sound judgement, but perhaps it would be attributing too much to his shrewdness of observation to ascribe to it the fine distinction in his appreciation of the two young religious.

"Sister Teresa Joseph" showed herself, indeed, an excellent religious from the first. Hers was one of those natures which seem formed for government—calm, firm, self-possessed, capable of long-sustained effort, inspiring confidence and a love founded on well-merited esteem—a character on which weaker natures would readily lean. She had not the winning simplicity of Mother Clement, nor perhaps the sweet lovableness of Mother Augustina Bedingfield, and had she been obliged to leave home secretly, instead of coming attended by the Queen's chaplain, we cannot imagine her forgetting her shoes in her haste, as Mother Mary Bedingfield had done, nor railing, like Catherine Holland, against the "cautious Provincial," whose prudence her eminent reasonableness would have understood. Withal she was distinguished for her love of Rule, her mortification, deep humility, and tender piety.

Her virtue must have been very striking, for, contrary to all custom, she was allowed to take the Novice's habit a fortnight after her entrance "with the Bishop and Convent's consent." The annals record that, "having all the improvement requisite by several years' application to virtue, she was clothed on the 17th of March, which was performed with all the solemnity the present times would allow of, her father being then in so eminent a place with our King, who was at that time looked upon as an enemy. This hindered the Bishop from performing the ceremony which he had offered to do, and was the cause that the Governor and chief of the town were not present at it."

It was but two months before the battle of La Hogue, so that the "Bride's" parents were also unable to attend, for they could not have entered a province subject to Spain; nor, indeed, could the Duchess of Powis have left Mary Beatrice, who was in an agony of anxiety as to the King's safety and was expecting the birth of her second child. The little Princess, who was born on June 28, and received the names of Louisa Mary, was confided to her care, as the Prince of Wales had been, but the Duchess who had been so faithful a friend of the exiled Stuarts died the following year on March 21.*

Four days later her daughter made her vows privately on the feast of the Annunciation, " a particular day of her devotion," her public Profession being deferred on account of the illness of Reverend Mother Mary Bedingfield. On the very day of the election of the new Prioress, Sister Teresa Joseph begged to be allowed to make her vows with the usual ceremonies as soon as possible, and she was accordingly professed on June 1, 1693.

In 1696 she was elected Procuratrix. The Constitutions guard against the distractions inherent to this office, ordaining that though the nun on whom it is imposed " lies under the necessity of being solicitous about many things, yet she must not neglect her silence and interior peace of mind, but as much as the business of the house will allow, she shall retire to her cell, that by reading, praying, and meditating, she may recollect her mind, lest it be distracted by outward employment and so lay up in the closet of her breast something profitable, which she may sweetly and profitably impart to those who are under her charge." How well Sister Teresa Joseph fulfilled this injunction is shown by the piety and deep interior spirit of her book of *Devotions*.

In 1701 came news of the death of " our King James ye 2d," and the nuns "performed a solemn service, with scutcheons and hearse." On August 8, 1708, the annals record a visit of his son, and we cannot doubt that it must have been a joy to Lady Lucy to see the young prince, over whose infancy her mother had watched so devotedly, and whom she had not seen since he was a child of four years old. He was now just twenty, and had won general applause by his valour at the battle of Oudenarde (July 14 of that year), in which the Elector of Hanover had fought on the other side. James's visit to the Convent is thus described: "On August 8 our King James III entered our enclosure with all his attendants and a crowd of other people, rich and poor, who got in with them. His Majesty touched several in our

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* " Item die vigessima Prima Martii Anno a Virginis partu millessimo sexcentissimo nonagesimo primo, obdormivit in Dno nobillissima celsissima et potentissima Domina Dna Elizabethae Somerset Ducissa de Powis et suae Regiae Celsitudinis Principis Walliae Gubernatrix" (Obit Book of the English Convent).

Infirmary, and that in a most edifying and devout manner, tho' he was then but a young prince. We prepared a handsome table with coffee, tea, etc., but His Majesty would not accept of anything, he but just coming from dinner at Count de la Mothe's, the General of the French in these parts.* Three of those our king touched were of oure religious, to wit, Str Clare Saunderson, Str Henrietta Markham, and Str Mary Bernard Tasburgh." Two years later "Sir Francis Jernegan (Jerningham) having heard that his daughter, Sister Mary Teresa, was suffering from a kind of king's evil, wrote to express his kind and tender concerns for her, offering to pay the expenses of the going into France to be touched by our King" if leave could be obtained; but this proposal was not carried into effect.

In February, 1709, the Prioress, Mother Mary Wright, died; "a great example of all virtues, but her humility was singularly remarkable above all the rest." The elections, which were held on March 5, the Feast of the Saints of the Order, placed Lady Lucy Herbert at the head of the Community.

Before entering into any details concerning her government, which was to last for thirty-five years, it will be best to record the last references made by the Chronicler to the Stuart cause with which the Powis family was so intimately connected.

During the years preceding the rising of 1715 visits from members of Mother Herbert's relations and friends seem to have been frequent; no doubt they confided to her their hopes as to the Restoration of the "Chevalier de St Georges" to the throne of his ancestors, and the nuns will have prayed devoutly for what to them must have appeared synonymous with the return of England to the ancient Faith.

When, in the August of 1715, the royal standard was unfurled at Braemar and James III was proclaimed King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, among the most prominent of the gallant gentlemen who joined his cause was the Earl of Nithsdale, who had married Lady Winefred Herbert, and Lord Derwentwater, whose two aunts, Sisters Elizabeth and Katherine Radcliffe, were professed at St Monica's, Louvain, while many others among the Canonesses had relations among the leading Jacobites. It can be imagined, therefore, with what eagerness news from England was expected, and the sorrow and anxiety with which the account of the surrender at Preston on November 14 must have been received in both Communities.

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* Count de la Motte was defeated by General Webb the following year, when "James III" was again in Flanders for his second campaign.

Lords Derwentwater, Nithsdale, and Kenmure were among the peers selected by King George's Government to be made an example of, and these three were excepted from the respite granted to the others.

Lady Nithsdale was at Terregles when she heard the fatal news:

> " Our Lady dow do nought now but wipe aye her e'en . . .
> Her heart's like to burst the gold lace of her gown;
> Men silent gaze upon her, and minstrels make a wail. . . .
> O dool for our brave warrior, the Lord of Nithisdale !"

So sings the minstrel, but " Nithsdale's bonnie Lord " had a wife of dauntless courage and wonderful resourcefulness. In his farewell letter to his sister, the Countess of Traquair, he says: " Everybody admires her, every body applaudes her and extolles her for the proofs she has given me of her love."

The letter in which she herself gives an account of the way in which she effected her husband's escape was written some time after the event, at Mother Herbert's request, and is too interesting to be passed over here, though its length prevents its being quoted in full.

" DEARE SISTER,

" My Lord's escape is such an old story now, that I have almost forgott it, but since you desire the account, to whom I have too many obligations to refuse anything that is in my power, I will indeavour to call it to mind, and be as exact in the relation as I can possible. I think I owe myselfe the justice to begin by the motives I had to atempt so hazardous an enterprise, which I fully intended not to goe about till the very last, forsing all the difficulties, which could not be surmounted without a perticular protection of almighty God, but rely'd it would not be refused me, when all human resources failed. You must then know, that when I first came to London, which I did as soon as ever I heard of my Lord's being sent to the Tower, and his earnest desire I should, he, as he sent me word, having noe body till I came, upon which I rode to Newcastle,* and took the coach there to York, but there fell so much snow that when I came thither, the York coach could not goe, so I took horses and rode to London through such weather, the very post stopt some dayes, and we were up to the horse girts in snow; however, I gott safe and without accident. When I arrived, I went imediately and solicited all the persons in power, without the least hopes given me of any favour; all the contrary, every one was so plain as to tell me that perhaps some of the prisoners might be pardoned but not him for certain. I beg'd to know the occasion of this distinction, but could obtain no answer to that point, but that they would not flatter me, which, tho' they did not tell me, well did I know the reasons: a Catholick vpon the Borders, and one who had a great following, and whos family had ever upon all occasions stuck to the royal family, and the only suport the Catholicks had amongst that Whigish part of the countrey, would be well out of the way. They had not forgot that his grandfather held out, as the last garison in Scotland, his own Castle of Ca(r)laverock, and render'd it up but by the King's orders, so that, now they had him in their power, they were resolv'd not to let him slip out of their hands. Vpon which I took the resolution to indeavour his escape, but confided my intention to noe body but my dear Evans" (her Welsh maid).

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* From Terregles near Dumfries.

Lady Nithsdale goes on to tell how she begged to be allowed to see her husband, which was refused her unless she would share his captivity, as Lady Derwentwater had consented to share that of her husband,* but she alleged her health as a motive for not agreeing to this, her real reason being that it would have interfered with her plan of contriving her lord's escape.

The account of her presenting a petition to the King must be given in her own words: "My Lord had a great inclination to have a petition given, thinking it might be of benefit; for my part I did not think it would be of any, but was willing to content him, so desir'd him to have his petition drawn, and I would find a way to deliver it, notwithstanding all the precaution the

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* She was daughter of Sir John Webb of Odstock, a family which gave several members to the Communities of Louvain and Bruges. Sir John Webb of Odstock and Canford, who died in 1668, was a great benefactor of the Bruges Community in the early days of its foundation.

Electour had taken to avoid it; so the first day that I knew he was to goe to the drawing room, I dressed my selfe in black mantow and peticoat, as if in mourning, and sent Mrs. Morgan, the same as went with me to the Tower afterwards, . . . for I did not know the Electour, and might have taken another for him, and she did, so would show me the right. I had another gentlewoman with me, but I forgot who, but we went all 3 into the chamber that was between his closet and the drawing room, so that he was to pass the wholl length of the room to goe to it, and there being 3 windows in it, we sat our selves vpon the midle one, that I might have time to catche him before he could get by, which I did and knelt down and presented my petition, telling him in French* that I was the vnhappy Countess of Nithsdaill, that he might not pretend he knew not who I was, but finding him going without taking my petition, I took hold of the skirt of his coat, that he might stay to heare me; but he indeavour'd to get away, and I held so fast, that he drew me vpon my knees almost from the midle of the chamber to the drawing room door; at last one of the Bleu Ribonds that was with him took me round the waist to draw me back, and another drew the skirt of his coat out of my hand, and the petition that I had indeavour'd to put in his poket fell down in the strugle, and I almost s(w)ounded with the trouble; however one of the gentlemen took the petition, and as I knew it ought to have been given by him to the Lord of the Bed Chamber that was in waiting, I had wrote a letter before hand, and desired he would doe me the favour to have a petition read that I had had the honour to give to the King, as I was then forced to term him. It proved to be my Lord Dorset, by good luck for me, it being one Mrs. Morgan was very well acquainted with; she went into the drawing room and deliver'd the letter to him, which he took very civilly, but could not then read it, for he was at cards with the Prince, but as soon as the game was ended, he did and acted, as I heard, very warmly and kindly in the matter, to which he was induced the more by the Duke of Montrose, who had seen me as he had passed into the room, and was then coming to me to speak to me, but I made him a sign not to doe it, for feare his takeing notice of me might have spoilt my design. They gott my petition to be read more than once, without any effect, but served for the discource there that night, and my being so rudely treated had made a noise, and gave no good reputation to the Duke of Hanover, for several said, what had they brought them selves to, for the Kings of England was never vsed to refuse a petition from the poorest woman's hand, and to vse a person of my quality in such a manner as he had don, was a piece of vnheard of brutality; these talkes made the Electour have a particular dislike to me, which he shew'd afterwards, for when all the ladies whos lords had been concern'd in this business, put in clames for their jointures, mine was given amongst the rest, but he said I was not, nor did not deserve the same privilege; so I was excepted, and would never heare speak in my favour."

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* It will be remembered that George I did not understand English.

Lady Nithsdale then resolved to carry out her own plan, to which, with great difficulty, she had induced her husband to agree. Two days before the date fixed for the execution (February 24, on which day Lord Derwentwater was beheaded) she went to the Tower and told the guards that a debate which had just been held in the House of Lords had been favourable to the prisoners and that she came with joyful tidings. She gave the men "some money to drink to the Lords and His Majesty . . . for I thought that giving them something would gain their good will and serve us for the next day, which was the eve of the execution."

On the evening of the 23rd she arrived with her friend Mrs. Morgan, and a Mrs. Mills, whose services she had likewise enlisted. The account of the escape is very detailed and somewhat involved. Lady Nithsdale seems to have relied on confusing the guards by the changes of clothes and the numerous comings and goings she contrived.

Mrs. Morgan was first taken up to the prisoner's chamber; she carried some clothes under her cloak and gave him some of those she wore. Lady Nithsdale led her downstairs and dismissed her, asking aloud that a maid should be sent to dress her as she had a petition to present that night and was afraid of being late. Mrs. Mills then went up, put on the clothes Mrs. Morgan had brought, and gave her own to Lord Nithsdale, whose face and eyebrows were painted and an artificial head-dress of the same coloured hair as that of Mrs. Mills's (" a little vpon the yalow ") was put on him. It was again Lady Nithsdale who led Mrs. Mills downstairs, crying out to her in a loud voice: "My dear Mrs. Catherine, go in all haste and send my waiting-maid. . . . I shall be on thorns till she comes."

She then returned to her husband and completed his disguise, and when it was nearly dark she took him down, holding him by the hand, while he hid his face in a handkerchief, as if overcome by emotion. To him she said: "My dear Mrs. Betty, for the love of God run quickly and bring my maid with you . . . if ever you made dispatch in your life do so at present. . . . I am almost distracted with this disappointment." She accompanied him to the door, which the guard opened. The faithful maid, Evans, was waiting outside for him and conducted him to a place of safety.

Lady Nithsdale returned to his room, and for some time talked in a loud voice, sometimes imitating his. At last, when she thought he would have made good his escape, she opened the door and holding it ajar, bid him farewell, saying that as Evans had not come, she could wait no longer, and that she flattered herself she would bring him good news in the morning. She then left the Tower and was allowed to pass out freely.

It is difficult to believe that none of the guards should have noticed that only three persons had gone up and that four had come down! Perhaps they were not over-anxious to keep good watch that evening; the impression Lady Nithsdale had so adroitly given them as to the speedy liberation of the prisoner would certainly prevent their expecting an attempt to escape, but there may be much meaning in what she herself writes: "The poor guards, who, vpon the little I had given them the night before, were in good humour, let me in and out with my people very willingly, and were not so much vpon the *qui vive*."

Lady Nithsdale gives a graphic description of her own joy when she realized that she had succeeded in saving her husband's life:

"After which, I made one of the servants call me a chair, and bid them goe to the Dutchess of Montrose, who had all along show'd a perticular concern for me. . . . She came to me, and as my heart was very light, I smil'd when she came into the chamber, and run to her in great joy. She realy started when she saw me, and since own'd that she thought my head was turned with trouble, till I told my good fortune; after which she beg'd me to put myself in security, for that she knew the Electour was highly displeased with me for the pitition I had given him that had occasion'd his being complain'd of. . . . The Dutchess said she would goe to court, and see how the newse was received, which she did, and told me the Electour stormed terribly when the account came, and said he was betrayed, for he was sure it could not have been done without connivance."

Lady Nithsdale knew well the risk she had incurred, for she says in this letter that she was told "that tho' in all other cases a wife could not be persued for making her husband's escape, yet in matter of treason, according to the rigour of the law, a wive's head answers for her husband's, and the Electour was so enraged at me, that they would not answer what might happen." Her friends, therefore, strongly advised her to rejoin Lord Nithsdale on the Continent, whither he had escaped in the disguise of a manservant.

Nevertheless she first rode to Scotland, putting up at the small inns where she was not known, for she would not go overseas till she had saved the family papers for her son: "As I had once exposed my life for the safety of the father, I could do no less than hazard it once more for the fortune of the son." George I had issued orders for her arrest, declaring "that I did what I pleased in spight of his heart, and that I had done him more mischief than any woman in Christendom."

Lady Nithsdale adds: "In the fury they were in against me, it was not advisable for me to venter the falling into their hands, vpon which I went of."

We seem to be far from the English Convent at Bruges, yet surely it is not out of place to have given here some account of that which must have been listened to with such interest, as the nuns sat round their Prioress in the Cloister of Nazareth while she read them the letter she had just received from her sister.*

The annals record that "On the 12th of August, 1716, Lady Nithsdale, sister to our Reverend Mother, with her little daughter, the Lady Anne Maxwell, and her two women, arrived here from England. This lady had gained great renown for having undertaken and so ingeniously contrived her lord's escape out of the Tower of London, just the night before they designed to execute him with the Lord Derwentwater. This lord was made prisoner upon the unhappy defeat of all our King's friends at Preston. . . . She stayed here till the 14th of September, then went to her lord in France."*

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* The original letter was given to Lady Bedingfield by the Prioress of the Convent at Bruges in 1828. In 1855 it passed into the possession of Mr. Constable Maxwell, afterwards Lord Herries. The original letter is not dated, but a copy was made which is dated "Royal Palais de Rome, April 16th, 1718." The writer has been at pains to change all expressions which might, at that time, have given offence to the reigning dynasty. Thus George I is styled the "King" instead of the "Electour," and corrections are made which spoil the simplicity of the original.

All Mother Herbert's sisters seem to have turned to her in their anxieties and difficulties, and to have been ever ready to render service to the Community which they loved.

The eldest, Mary, was married three times; firstly to Lord Molyneux, secondly to Lord Montagu, and lastly to Sir George Maxwell, though she is always referred to in the annals as Lady Montagu.

Frances, the second sister, married Kenneth Mackenzie, Earl of Seaforth,† and Anne became Lady Carrington. Their brother, William Herbert, took his seat in the House of Lords in 1722, and conformed to the Established Church, to the great grief of his sisters. He had but one son, who was the last of the old line of the Herberts of Powis.

In 1739, through the initiative of the Subprioress at Bruges (Sister Anne Weston), the Bishop's leave was asked for "my Lady Montagu with three women to enter the enclosure, with the design to end her days among us."

Such an arrangement would not be tolerated nowadays in an enclosed Order, but it seems to have been frequently allowed by ecclesiastical Superiors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Lady Montagu was not able to walk, "and was resolved to go where she could have the benefit of hearing Mass daily without stirring from her chamber." The Bruges Community has good reason to remember her with gratitude, for "she founded our second daily

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* Lord Nithsdale died in 1744; his wife survived till 1749. At the end of this chapter some notes are given with regard to their life at Rome to which are added an account of a visit paid to the Convent by the Duke of York and a letter concerning Prince Charles Edward's escape after Culloden.

† She died in 1732, leaving a reputation for great holiness. A story is told of her appearing to her great-grandson, Lord Kenmure, while he was praying. The impression made was so deep that sixty years later, seeing her portrait at Brahan Castle, he at once recognized her.

Mass, as is seen in her epitaph under the organ-house of our church. This Mass we began in her ladyship's room, July 16, 1741." The room being then the only one in the house furnished with a bell, was called "Ring-Hall," a name which is still in use.

In 1736 the present church was built. It is an octagon surmounted by a dome, supported by four Corinthian pillars. The altar was only erected in 1739, and the annals give the following entries concerning it: "Our fine marble altar arrived from Rome, where the Lady Nithsdale had seen to the purchase of it. It is what they call crusted marble, that is, marble of the thickness of a crown piece laid upon rustic stone. They make them so at Rome, so that, except four or five of the old standing ones there are none of solid marble. Such marble is very scarce; most of it comes from Egypt and Persia. Our altar is composed of two or three and twenty sorts of the finest marble. It cost £522, which was thought exceeding cheap. Even those at Rome judged it to have cost as much again."

Both church and altar are undoubtedly beautiful of their kind, and descriptions of them are to be found in the guide-books to Bruges, but the memorial tablets bearing the names of More, Gifford, Talbot, and Herbert, constitute its chief interest for English visitors.

The Convent grounds were extended and the monastery was considerably enlarged under Mother Herbert's Priorate. In 1710 two gardens were purchased which now form the school playground. The leave to take them into the enclosure came on the Eve of SS Peter and Paul, and "that night after Compline, our Reverend Mother and the Subprioress went first and the rest of the religious followed in order. They began the litanies at our Lady's statue in the old garden, and continued it round the new one, our Reverend Mother all the time carrying our Lady's image" . . . probably the one which the nuns had brought from Louvain, and which is still preciously preserved.

The cloister was lengthened down to the present school, but Mother Herbert in no wise departed from the old tradition of simplicity in the monastic buildings; and she showed her love of poverty by declaring that "were she to live many years and were she able to build further, without expense, she would not do so, for it would not draw God's blessing on ye house, were it larger than was needed."

In 1729 the centenary of the foundation of the Convent was kept "with pious jubilee." Some of the details regarding the rejoicings are amusingly told. The workmen who had been employed in the buildings requested "that on the Jubilee day they might enter our garden and shoot off little canons, as they usually do in these countries at great solemnities. Our Reverend Mother did not relish the noisy kindness they proposed, and told them that it was not in her power to let them into the enclosure on such an account . . . but they would not be so put off, and went in a body to the Bishop and beg'd the favour of him. His Lordship was unwilling to grant it because, not long before, he being to bless a bell in the country, a man was accidentally kill'd in time of his Mass, as they were shooting off such canons, but our workmen esteem'd themselves more expert at it than the boors, and therefore insisted that there was no danger, so my Lord Bishop yielded to their importunity upon condition they should not shoot while he was at our monastery. This being concluded they prepared 150 little canons and gunpowder accordingly, at their own expense." On September 14 the Bishop came to sing the solemn high Mass assisted by six priests, the Lord Abbot of the Canons Regular of Echoute being present with some of the chief of the town, and afterwards "a handsome dinner was prepared in the Father's house and Reverend Mother begged the Bishop to preside at it, but this he would by no means do, saying he should invite all the pastors of the town to dine at his palace and to drink our healths and rejoice with him for our jubilee. My Lord Abbot and some of the gentlemen remained to dine . . . and the little canons in the garden played briskly at the beginning, middle, and end of the dinner, and when they drank healths at the Father's house!" Among the delicacies provided for the occasion we find mentioned "pasties and beef baked in plum-pudding, march pan and burnt wine." "Our neighbours adorned the whole street with flags and boughs, and there was great noise and rejoicing, though we had not then given them anything, my Lord Bishop having advised our Reverend Mother not to give them drink for fear of a noise and tumult, and indeed her inclination was to have this Jubilee only a festival of devotion and merriment among ourselves, but finding our neighbours so kind without encouragement, her Reverence order'd two barrels of beer to be placed at different houses in the street on the Octave day, and then they again set up lights on our walls. Our neighbours the religious of Bethania set up lights also, and made bonfires to rejoice with us. Two hundred loaves were given privately to the poor."

On the occasion of this Jubilee and of that of 1743, when Mother Herbert kept the fiftieth anniversary of her Profession, many presents were given to the Community, of which some are of interest. Thus we find "Our Queen Mary, King James the second's Queen, gave her picture to our Revd Mother Herbert.* My Lady Dover gave the great silver lamp (in the church) with a foundation for oyl to maintain it. Lady Teresa Throgmorton (niece to our Revd Mother) presented her with 22 pound sterling for the printing of the book of her devotions;† most of the English Monasteries were very desirous of them and had several, but her Reverence could not spare so many as they desired. Lady Nithsdale sent to each of our Community from Rome a pair of beads trimmed and a brass crucifix. Her ladyship sent also a box in wch was 14 pictures of the passion, stiled the stations of the holy Cross, to whc great indulgences is given.‡ From the same kind hand we had the lace of our four best albs, two point, two Flanders Lace, they belonged to the Prince of Wales's cradle and cost nearly 1,000 £, the Dutchess her mother being governante to the Prince caused them to be at her Ladyship's disposal."

Another souvenir given about this time is the rosary of Queen Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II. The cross and the large beads are of amber, and the small beads show on one side death's heads and on the other faces representing all ages and states of life: a king, a jester, an old man, a young girl, etc., all very finely carved.

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* It is still kept at the English Convent, where there are also several pictures of Lady Lucy Herbert and a large one of Lady Montagu bestowing alms on a negro—a specimen of the taste of the period, as is also that of Lady Lucy, dressed elegantly with a profusion of lace and ruffles, and withal a shepherdess's crook and lamb. In the visitors' parlour at the Priory, Haywards Heath, there hangs a small painting of Lady Montagu in the robes of a Peeress.

† The edition was "Printed with permission by Paul Roose, at the Blew Goose." Another edition was published about the year 1790 by C. De Moor, "In the Name of Jesus."

‡ From the wording of this passage we may conclude that this was the first introduction of the devotion of the Way of the Cross into the Community. It was being greatly popularized at this time by St Leonard of Port Maurice (1676-1751). Father Thurston, S.J., in his little work on the Stations of the Cross says that it was not generally known in England before about 1845.

Mother Herbert's death occurred the year after her Jubilee, 1744, and is thus recorded in the annals: "On January 19 our dear Superior departed this life, leaving the whole community in great affliction for such a loss and example of all virtues. She was endowed with an extreme piety, a well grounded mortification, a profound humility, a most ardent devotion to our Redeemer in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and was most exact in all religious duties. Her feeling devotion to Our Saviour's Passion made her suffer all pains, both corporal and spiritual, with exceeding patience. Her meekness and sweetness of temper rendered her amiable to everyone, both equals and inferiors. She had an heroic courage to overcome all difficulties in everything she undertook for the glory of God. She improved our enclosure by the addition of building from the refectory quite to the end. The last work in her time was the church, and new father's house, and speak-house [*i.e.*, parlour to which visitors are admitted]. . . . She had been for above two years in a lingering state of health, but could by no means be persuaded to stay from the choir and refectory, till the Subprioress sent to the archpriest to use his authority. He obliged her to stay from Matins and to use such helps as were judged absolutely necessary to keep her alive. Being almost exhausted and worn out, she was prevailed upon to lie in her chamber [*i.e.*, room in which the Prioress receives the nuns during the day] which was much against her inclination, for she had a true love of her cell and solitude. In all things she was perfectly resigned to God's Will, and her confidence in His Divine Providence made her go through the greatest difficulties with cheerfulness. She often said in her last illness, when she could hardly be heard to speak, being near the end: 'Who can distrust God's Mercy?'

"When the doctor, by reason of her excessive weakness, judged she could not hold on long, and ordered her all the rites of the Church, the Subprioress, with great difficulty, being moved with a tender concern for our approaching loss, told her of it, she smiling answered, 'God's will be done.' Then she desired that when she had received them she might be left alone as much as possible the remaining time she was in the world, but that being too hard a task for her children, to be deprived of her before it pleased God to make the separation, she cheerfully submitted to our going to her as often as we could. She received the Holy Rites from the hands of our confessor, who assisted her to the last moment of her life, which she ended in all peace, about eleven o'clock at night, on January 19, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, to which she had a particular devotion. She was 75 years of age, 51 professed, and 35 superior. On the 23rd she was buried, my lord Bishop and the Abbot of Echouts being present. Both had their places in the sanctuarium. The Archpriest sang Mass with two assistants, and received the offering both of men and women."

Her epitaph, which may still be seen in the church she built, runs as follows:

D.O.M.

HIC JACET

PRAEN^{s} D^{na} LUCIA THERESIA HERBERT DE POWIS

FILIA
NOB^{ssm} CELS^{ssm} AC POT^{ssm} GULIELMI
DUCIS DE POWIS MARCHIONIS DE MONTGOMERY.
SUMMAE REGIAE AULAE PRAEFECTI
ET
ELISABETH SOMERSET
SUAE REGIAE CELSITUDINIS PRINCIPIS WALLIAE GUBERNATRICIS
NATA FUIT MDCLXVIIII
RELIGIONEM PROFESSA KAL^{dis} JUNII MDCXCIII
OBIIT XIV KAL^{das} FEBRUARII MDCCXLIV
POSTQUAM PRIMA INTER PARES
ANNOS FUERAT XXXV

R. I. P.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

In 1716 the Nithsdales went to Rome, where James III had established himself in the Muti Palace. There were the usual heartburnings and jealousies in the little court, and Lord Nithsdale, like other adherents of the exiled Stuarts, was reduced to very straitened means.

"He's fled awa' to bonnie France,
Wi' nought but ae pennie,"

says the old ballad, which commemorated his escape; and Lady Nithsdale wrote to her sister Mary, Countess of Traquair, that she was "realy in raggs" and had asked "some cloths' of her niece, Mary Herbert.

She was hurt and disappointed when, at the birth of Prince Charles Edward in March, 1720, she was not given the post of "governess," which her mother had fulfilled towards his father. She had applied for it, but James III refused very courteously saying, "My wife has but litle to doe and will look after it herselfe."

Lady Nithsdale took, however, the liveliest interest in the young prince and wrote such details as his "gubernatrix" would have noted. Thus in April, 1721, she says: "My master, Mistris, and their young son are all in good health, and he one of the finest children that can be of his age." And in September of the same year, "he every day grows more charming," and again, in 1722, "he has now four teeth, but that is litle for his age. He does not yet stand allone, much less walk, but is lively enough. God Almighty bless and preserve him." In 1723 she writes to her sister, "As I know you are alwise solicitous to know newse of our young Master's thriving, I was willing not to miss letting you know that he has cut his two eye teeth without any trouble. . . . He walks now pretily, and makes himself be very well vnderstood, so that he is grown a most charming child. God Almighty bless him!"*

In 1725 she writes: "Our Mistress has brought us another brave boy, as fine a child as one can wish." This was Henry Benedict, the future Cardinal of York. In 1746 he paid a visit to the English Convent. It was a time of great anxiety for him, for his brother, to whom he was tenderly attached, was still wandering in the Highlands after his defeat at Culloden. Henry had obtained leave at this time to serve with the French army in Flanders and was present at the siege of Antwerp. His visit to the Nuns is thus recorded:

"June ye 9th. Corpus Christi day, in time of ye Hours a message was sent us by the Duke of York (who the night before came to town) to desire in place of a musick Mass that we would only have a low one, wch he would hear. Accordingly, at the end of ye Hours we staid for his royall highness, who in about half an hour came. 'Twas most edifying to see with wt devotion he heard Mass, he would admitt of no ceremony, not so much as to kneel at the place prepared for him in the sacristy, but knelt the whole time in ye church. At the end of ye Mass he came into ye sacristy and desired to see the whole Community. The Bd Sacrament being exposed, he would not goe to the Chapel gates for fear of causing distractions, so we all went to the sacristy door where his Highness spoke to us in a very familiar way and permitted us to kiss his hand. He would not come into the enclosure, saying it would occasion trouble and confusion, but, like a private person, recommended himself to our prayers and took leave."

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* See *The Book of Carlaverock*, by William Fraser, Edinburgh. One hundred and fifty copies were privately printed in 1873.

Prince Charles Stuart landed safely at Roscoff in Brittany on October 10, and an hitherto unpublished letter is kept in the Convent, which is of sufficient interest to be given in full:

After long silence (tho y^{u} are in my debt) which I kept on purpos through y^{e} dismallness of our affairs, & y^{e} uncertainty of news since y^{e} unhapy battle of Culloden, I now resume my pen, tho I should have done it sometime agoe, but defer'd it till I had had y^{e} honour of paying my respects to our Prince, since his return, & had thereby put myself in a capacity of giveing y^{e} a certain account of him, upon which, y^{u} may with all security depend, as haveing it imediately from Mr cunstable's own mouth, & he imediately from y^{e} Prince.

His Royal Highness arrived here about a Month agoe at 6 a clock in y^{e} morning & went to an English Bankquer's whom I know very well, his dress was an old red Jacket with some few brass buttons on it, which reached down to his hips, & the rest was in proportion, for all which Mr Constable protested to me, he would not have given half a Crown. the Prince sent imediately for his Brother, & y^{u} may imagine how moveing y^{e} meeting was, in y^{e} main time all hands were at work to make his Royal Highness 2 dosen shirts, & get him cloathes, which were accomplished in 2 days time, & on y^{e} 3d he & his Brother made a Glorious Entry into Fountain Bleau, where they, but y^{e} Prince in a more distinguished maner, were treated & carressed by y^{e} Royal Famely, & all y^{e} Court, according to their caracter. The Queen cried at ye Princes account of his misfortunes & escapes, which he told with y^{e} most surprizing modesty, & air of unconcern, saying he had been always brought up to hunting, which had rendered him hardy, & I may add that non but himself could have survived such hardships, notwithstanding which he is fatter by an Inch in y^{e} Body, grown branny like a highlander, has something in his face a little wild, and more martiall Countinance, weather beaten, & weres little short croppd hair, about half an inch long, which does not tuch his Ears, like Charles y^{e} 12th King of Swade, in all which he cutts a much more heroicall figure, than he did before his expedition into Scotland, & is adored by every one & called the Roman Heroe.

He has his highland sabre, Pistoles & durk with him, his hardships begun after y^{e} affair Culloden, & continued about 5 monthes, in all which time his food was a little oate meal (if he could get it) & water, he owns his chiefest sustinance was smoaking, which he continues yet by advice, not to break it of all at once, he was once he says 2 days without eating, & said to 2 or 3 of his companions, (who were always of ye vulgor sort) & never y^{e} same two days running, but some he acciddently mett roveing, said if it was y^{e} will of God he should die starveing he had as willingly die that way as any other, when sudenly by divine Providence which he extolls in his discource very much, on y^{e} occation; a deer passed by gentley grazing by y^{e} mouth of y^{e} Rocks-Cavern where he was, & his companions knocked it down, they imediately cutt it in pieces, made a fire, & flung y^{e} pieces into it, & tho black & smoaked, in y^{t} way as y^{u} may easily conceive he says he never made a hartyer meal in his life; this stagg sarved him, & his & others some days, without Bread or oatmeal.

Another time being all alone, & discovering some troopes, who were in search of him, he hid himself in a very thick Bush, within a few yards of a Rivulet, y^{e} Sun he sais was scorching upon him, which flung him into a most violent thurst, & tho he had y^{e} water just before his Eyes, was obliged to keep close ye whole day without being able to satisfy his thurst, ys day he accounts ye worst of all his sufferings.

behold 2 examples of hunger & thurst as all houses for above 60 miles, on y^{e} highlands are burnt down he always sheltered by day in y^{e} Rocks & wanderd in y^{e} night, his dress was his little jacket, & a torn shirt, & neither shoes, stockens or Breaches, with a little Bonnet without hair on his head, as I mention shoes he says he had one pair, but observeing 'em wear too fast, he hung 'em Cross his shoulders to spare them, & never wore 'em but on rugged ground, which he says was a great regalle to him, as to Breeches he says even now he can scarce manige himself in them, & calls them troublesome things. what a strange alteration in a Prince.

he lay a whole day upon a moor, in y^{e} thickest and highest part of it surrounded by soldiers, but was not discoverd, has layn whole nights under y^{e} heavens with violent showers of Rain beating on his back, which he did not, he says, find so incomodious as y^{e} percing North winds, which he found insuportable & always made up to some Tree or Rock to shelter himself from their inclemency, especially if there was both rain & wind: not withstanding he was always healthfull, chearfull, & would sometimes break into a song to encourage his companions, who were dejected for him & themselves & would tell them that dejection would be of no Service to them. The Prince assures us y^{t} if he had been ill only for y^{e} space of an hour, in his hardships, he should have been a dead man, becaus no one could give him succour, & motion only, & exercise kept him alive, one day his companions (observe he had not always Companions) complained to him they could get no water to mix with their oatmeal to make oat cake, why says he; doe as I doe, take y^{r} oat meal & lay it tihck upon y^{r} cheese, & so eat it, & I will answer it will have the same affect in y^{e} stomack, as oat cake; the Prince carry'd his cheese (when he coud get it) in one pocket & his oatmeal in another, which was in his little jacket; Innumerable in fine are y^{e} severe adventers of his Royal highness, where y^{e} hand of God was viseble, as well for his life as safety, which we may truely call a miracle of Providence, as he was hunted like a hair for so many monthes by his enimies, allways roveing & wandering, always in hunger sometimes more, sometimes les; never in Bed, sometimes in Rocks, sometimes in Moors, never in a house in so much y^{t} he was found in a Rocks-Cavern when news was brought to him of y^{e} arrival of y^{e} two ships of his escape, he was then 3 Jorny of them, which he performed in y^{e} night time. he was only once disguised in womans Cloaths for a short time & I belive he made an extravigant figure in them.

the most wonderful thing in all his rencounters, is that he was not betrayd, considering y^{e} sum of money upon his head, & sentance of death on those who did not deliver him up, being always attended only by voulger Persons who constantly at the first meeting would make him y^{e} complement by saying, Charles we know what is laid on y^{r} head but wont betray y^{u}, the Prince confest he found y^{e} Complements somewhat shocking to him, as being repeated in y^{e} same way by every one he accidentely met, but at last he grew accustom'd to it, & extolls above measure, yet very deservedly, the fidelity of those poor creatures, & we must bless God, who inspired into their harts such noble sentiments of duty & honour.

I hope this small sketch of particulers, which I had from Mr. Constable's own mouth, may be agreeable to y^{u}, till I can acquant you with more it will give you in y^{e} interime at least some Idea of our Princes sufferings, & amuse you in your recreation week, which is the Recreation for our Nuns,* the Prince making them a present of six Hares of his own shooting. . . .

In another hand is added:

P.S.—F. Shelley acquaints us y^{t} y^{e} sentence was passed for Lord Derwentwater to be executed on Monday next unless a reprieve could be obtained & y^{t} on Wednesday last arived at Ant: an Express sent by him & his friends, who only stop'd whilst he got a passport from the Governor & took Post for Paris, to try if y^{e} good offices of his Lady & other friends at y^{t} Court cou'd word off y^{e} fatall blow, y^{t} y^{e} Express a Chirgeon by profession shewd a surprising concern for y^{e} poor L^{d} by floods of Tears w^{ch} much moved the Gov^{r}, etc.

Addressed

Au Révérend Pere
Le Très R^{d} Père Poole
Aux Collège des Pères Anglois
de la Compagnie de Jésus
à Gand.

The seal is the Lamb with the Cross standing on the book with the seven seals.

In 1788 occurs a last mention of the Prince once "adored by every one." "We had a long dirge said in the choir for Prince Charles Stuart and a solemn Mass for him the next morning; he died at Rome on the 31st of January."

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* The Benedictines at Paris. The letter was written by their confessor, Mr. Robinson.

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IX

"LIVES HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD"

In the early history of the foundations which sprang from the old Flemish Cloister of St Ursula's, the life of the Community is bound up with the great issues at stake in England.

It was persecution which had driven these Englishwomen from their country, and most of them belonged to families which were fighting the good fight for God and His Church. Even when, at the close of the seventeenth century, the adherents of James II followed him into exile, their fidelity was to one who, in the words of Louis XIV, "had cast away three kingdoms for a Mass," and so late as 1716 Lord Derwentwater was offered his life if he would deny his Faith.

But the persecutors gradually stayed their hands, though the penal laws remained on the statute book; their object was accomplished: England was no longer Catholic, and political opposition to the new order of things was at an end.

Catholics were but a scattered remnant, debarred from all share in public life, but they clung to their Faith with no less whole-heartedness than their forefathers had shown in more stirring times.

"Their religion was all in all to them," says Archbishop Ullathorne:* "they knew the Cross of Christ, and felt the Cross and were comforted by the Cross. They held with a firm and patient grasp to the Faith of their fathers . . . they cherished the memories of their martyrs, and they kept before their eyes the examples of the Saints. Indeed, the names of those martyrs and those Saints were household words, and like the memory of dear friends."

In such homes the Call of Christ to leave all and follow Him was gladly responded to by young hearts, eager to lead a life entirely given up to His service—a life which should be wholly "in laudem gloriae ejus."

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* See his *Letters*, pp. 180-181 (Burns and Oates).

The object of this chapter shall be to show how, in the quiet cloister, the religious carried out their high purpose with the simplicity traditional in the Windesheim Congregation.

None seem to have exemplified the words " Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari " more perfectly than Mother Mary Wright.* To convey an idea of her humility, one of her sisters, in some verses written after her death, resorts to such a line as the following:

" She was not humble, but—humility."

We may smile at the mannerism, so redolent of the age of Pope, but the deep impression made on the Community is testified to by her obituary notice. We possess also some fragments in Mother Wright's own hand on " two particular entertainments she had with Our Lord after Holy Communion." These, unfortunately, are all that escaped when she burnt the records of her spiritual life and the favours she had received from God.

The Chronicle tells us that " her humility was singularly remarkable above all her other virtues," and that for many years she avoided the office of Subprioress, her prayers and tears prevailing over the wish of the Community. At length she accepted through obedience the charge of the noviceship, and in 1693 was chosen Prioress. " She had so avoided all intercourse with seculars that when she was first elected it was a great wonder among them whom we had made choice of, they being entirely ignorant that we had such a person in our monastery, though she had lived in it over thirty years." She afterwards declared that " it was far more contrary to her natural inclinations to submit to be made Superior than it was to leave the world and enter a religious life." Nevertheless, there was some fear in her heart that by accepting this office she had departed from the hidden way to which God so specially drew her, and that she had thus displeased Him.

Then it was that the Divine Master deigned to reassure her Himself. One day, after Holy Communion, when she was expressing to Him her anxiety, it seemed to her that He answered, saying: " Believe that you have not offended Me in the least by taking this charge upon you, I designed it in Eternity; fear not; what is wanting I will supply, confide in Me and take My word, and My promise shall not fail you."

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* Daughter of John Wright of Kelvedon, Esq.

Henceforth she entirely abandoned herself to Divine Providence, declaring that to depend on it alone was her comfort in all difficulties. On all occasions she wholly confided in God alone, and in the greatest trials she would say, "This business will end well," and so it always happened, even when there was least appearance of good success.

The Chronicler adds that "it evidently appeared how pleasing to God was her humble confidence, for our community never enjoyed a more constant prosperity than during her government."

But the Master would not take from her the better part she had chosen. He would have her to show that those in authority are not debarred from the graces of the hidden life, but that the soul which "seeks and finds God in all, is ever solitary even in the midst of exterior multiplicity."* So we read that "on another day after Holy Communion, He assisted her in a particular manner with His graces in order to make herself an example to her subjects in silence and solitude," and she records that "God made known to her the excess of His Love for her soul in ways known only to Him and herself, enlightening her soul with what her pen could not express."

She bore patiently with the frailties of others, the weak and infirm found in her the care and compassion of a most affectionate mother, but she was most rigorous to herself, not accepting any relaxation from regular observance, without any consideration for her age and infirmities. Thus, during her last illness, though the winter was most sharp and severe, and she was in her seventy-third year, she only consented to allow a fire in her room a few days before her death, the doctor declaring that he could do her no good if she would not take reasonable solace. She died in February, 1709, after receiving the Holy Viaticum, kneeling in humble reverence. So perfect had been her fidelity to Rule that the obituary notice tells us "that the only point in which she departed from it was that in the practice of humility she seemed to abase the authority of Superior rather too much by the difficulty she had in submitting to the respect due to her in that charge," whereas St Augustine warns Superiors that there are certain outward manifestations of humility which they must renounce " lest their authority of governing others should be weakened." Blessed are they who need such warning and who can only be reproached with " having carried too far their regard to humility." But Mother Mary Wright seems to have loved to ponder rather on those other words of the Rule, which tell the Prioress that " though she is placed above her sisters in respect and honour before men, she is to look upon herself before God as prostrate at their feet."

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* Ruysbroeck.

During her Priorate she had received one whose spirit was very consonant to her own. This was Sister Emerentiana, a lay-Sister, who died three years after her Profession, having been made perfect in a short space.

She was born in England about the year 1672, and after her parents' death she and her three sisters lived together as religious, obeying the eldest sister as Superior, and in entire submission to their confessor's orders. What they gained by their work more than was necessary for poor clothes and " mean diet " they distributed in alms to the poor, to whom they also gave instruction and spiritual help, converting several. We are not told what was their position in life, nor what work they undertook, but they seem to have been educated, and, as we shall see, the work of the lay-Sisters was unfamiliar to Emerentiana.

" They allowed themselves little time for rest, spending the greater part of the night in prayer, and one night, when our Emerentiana was employed in this pious exercise, united to God in most fervent desires of conforming herself perfectly to His Divine Will and pleasure in all things, it was particularly revealed to her that though her present state was pleasing to the divine Majesty, yet it was His blessed Will that she should be more entirely united to Him, and by a more perfect sacrifice of her own will be consecrated to Him in the state of holy religion. She presently resolved to comply with this divine call, and was confirmed in her resolution by her confessor's approving it for a true inspiration.

" This she imparted to one of our ancient religious on the very day she made her holy Profession, and added that, notwithstanding all the obstacles which opposed her settlement here, she was still constantly assured that this was the place where God designed she should be."

The obstacles had been great indeed; she never spoke of the kind of life she had lived before entering the cloister, and " it was so austere and mortified that it had made her lean and pale, and she was judged to be advanced in years and not able to undertake the labours of a lay-Sister, and not being used to such kind of works, her ignorance and awkwardness in them provoked the impatience of some, and others esteemed her humble simplicity rather a want of sense than the effect of a solid and well-grounded virtue, as it really was found to be by sufficient and convincing proofs."

A like trial had been undergone about twenty years before by a novice in the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial, where the good infirmarian complained of the clumsiness and absorption, the unpunctuality and the unfitness for household work of Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque. Like her, Sister Emerentiana tasted the sweetness of being despised for the love of Jesus, and learnt by experience the truth of the words, " the humble God loveth and comforteth; unto the humble He inclineth Himself."*

At length she was told that she was totally unsuited for the state she wished to embrace, and that she must return to England. She received the announcement with humble submission, and answered calmly that it would be a great cross to her to leave the Community, but that she trusted Divine Providence so to dispose things that she might remain in a Catholic country, a privilege she greatly prized.

Mother Wright was well fitted to appreciate this chosen soul, and offered to retain her in the Convent, even though she should not be admitted to Profession.† This she gratefully accepted, and after some time " the Community having had experience of her patience and humility, never importuning or in any way expressing solicitude for her settlement, but seeming to abandon herself entirely to the conduct of Divine Providence, and willingly applying herself with a cheerful serenity to the hardest and most humbling works, it was resolved she should be admitted for a lay-Sister. On the day of her Profession she said she should not stay long among us, and after two years she fell into a lingering illness."

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* *Imitation*, Book II, chap. ii.

† Some maids are allowed in the enclosure for the service of the school.

God perfected her soul by acute sufferings, during which she ever maintained her union with Him and often expressed her longing to be with her Divine Spouse. He called her to Himself on May 31, 1703, and she left a memory of singular holiness among those who had witnessed her humble hidden life of prayer and labour.

It is not to be wondered at that those whose whole life is a constant tending to union with God should long for the day when that union will be consummated, and Thomas à Kempis exhorts us, when such a desire is perceived in the soul, to open our hearts wide to receive this holy inspiration. But we learn from the annals that at one time the nuns had to be forbidden to ask the dying to obtain for them the grace to follow them soon. The passage is touching in its simplicity.

Two sisters, Mary and Dorothy Rows or Rous, had made their vows on the same day, and after many years, " during which they lived sweetly and piously together, the younger had become blind. When the elder, Sister Mary, received the Last Sacraments, with great devotion and desire to die, her sister Dorothy praying by her bedside and desiring her to take her to Heaven with her, she answered that though she felt leaving the Community, she was glad to go to God and, if she found any power with Him, her poor blind sister should not stay long after her, but soon follow. And in effect, the night after her death, Sister Dorothy going well to bed, and most religiously resigned, and even comforted that her sister had died so happily, she was found in the morning very ill, with a vehement pain in her side, which increased to that excess that before nine the same morning she rendered her happy soul into the hands of her Creator. She made her confession, and immediately before receiving the Holy Oils (during the administration of which she died) she had sung a song of the Love of Jesus, whom she had ever served with much fervour and devotion.

" For some years before she died she had been blind of one eye, yet she was most constant in the Choir, and was almost in continual prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. She used to say that when it should please God to take from her the sight of her other eye she should still be able to sing the *Gloria Patri* cheerfully to Him, which I doubt not she soon performed in a blessed eternity.

"When Sister Dorothy was laid out Sister Catherine Bartlett, praying by the corpse, said aloud: 'Dear Sister Dorothy, I doubt not but you have as much power with Almighty God as your sister, if so, obtain that I may come soon to Him.' And that day fortnight she was buried, whereupon all were forbidden such requests."

Among those who in the early eighteenth century lived lives very truly "hidden with Christ in God" may be mentioned Sister Mary Xaveria Stanley,* the youngest of five daughters of Sir Rowland Stanley, who were all professed at the English Convent, and were "most fervorous religious women."

Of Sister Xaveria, we are told that from her first entrance till her death at the age of thirty-two, she ever went on increasing in fervour, giving to solitude, silence, and prayer all the time at her disposal. That none might notice how continual was her prayer she would go sometimes to the Choir, sometimes to the lay-Sisters' chapel, but great as was her love for being with her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, "at the first sign to any duty of obedience she went to it readily, and performed it cheerfully, and when anything was asked of her she expressed so great a contentment that she seemed more obliged in doing the service than the person could be who received it, so that all had recourse to her with the greatest freedom. Her mortification was constant and general, but especially in her diet, eating the veriest scraps she could find in the dishes, and pretending she liked them best. In Winter, her hands being all swelled and the skin broken with chilblains, she would only go to the fire if obedience obliged her, when she would sit and scorch herself a little and then go away. Never was the most remiss religious so ingenious to seek occasions of relaxation as she was to excuse herself from it even when judged most necessary by reason of her tender constitution or real illness. When she thought her sisters' care of her prevailed with the Prioress to indulge her in any kind, then (in their regard) it appeared she had a high spirit, which otherwise she had so tamed by virtue that she seemed rather to be of a mild and even disposition. In spite of a weakness on one side, which she had from her infancy, she would never complain of any difficulty or pain in the most laborious exercises, but would always give great assurance they were easy to her. This too great fervour in concealing her illness and forcing herself beyond her strength (together with the high spirit she had shown her sisters on the above-named occasions) were the only failings which were observed in her, and in her last sickness, she particularly endeavoured to make atonement for such faults by an humble acknowledgement of them, begging our Reverend Mother's pardon for having so often opposed her will by her wilfulness (as she termed it), and earnestly desiring her Reverence to manifest her frailties, and even vilify her to the whole Community that their charity might be more moved to pray for her. It was surprising to see how quiet and still she lay even in the very height of fever, keeping constantly in the same posture and complaining of nothing, but by her sweet and cheerful countenance, expressing the interior peace she enjoyed. She was given the Last Sacraments while we were singing the Mass for the burying of Sister Francis Xaveria Chichester,* and died on July 20, 1723. Requiescat in pace."

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* Sir Rowland Stanley of Hooton, in the county of Cheshire, was second son of Sir William Stanley (created Baron by Charles II in 1671). He was born in 1653, and married Anne, daughter of Clement Paston, Esq., of Berningham, Norfolk, by whom he had three sons and eight daughters. He died in 1737. In Luttrell's *Diary* (iv, 552), it is recorded that he had been imprisoned for "laying wagers about King James's return" (see Kirk's *Biography of English Catholic Nonjurors of* 1715). The Stanleys of Hooton Hall were the senior branch of the great family which acquired the earldom of Derby and the lordship of the Isle of Man.

Sister Aurelia Dillon was a soul of the same stamp as Sister Xaveria Stanley—one of those who are drawn " to aim at obscurity as the shortest and safest way of attaining an intimate union with Our Blessed Lord." She entered in 1776 with Sister Alipia Talbot.†

" Miss Betty Dillon (of Ireland) and Miss Kitty

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* Daughter of Giles Chichester of Arlington and of Catherine Palmes, niece of the Earl of Castlemaine. Sister Francis Xaveria was but fifteen at the time of her death. On February 9 of this same year is the entry: " Mrs. Ursula Chichester received our first habit and took the name of Francis Xaveria, she begged to be allowed to make her vows on her deathbed, and dying three days after was buried in our habit."

† Sister of the fifth Earl of Shrewsbury and daughter of the Hon. Charles Talbot and Mary, daughter of Sir George Mostyn of Talacre, Flint. The Dillon family were among the most devoted adherents to the Stuarts and had raised the famous " Dillon's Regiment," at the head of which James Dillon fell at the battle of Fontenoy. In the thirteenth century James, son of Sir Thomas Dylon, was a Canon Regular.

Talbot" had both passed some time in the Bruges School, though they had been sent also to the Abbaye de Pretz at Douai in order to learn French.

When they joined the Novitiate of the Canonesses Regular, both being then eighteen, the edict of the Empress Maria Theresa was in force, "forbidding under a great penalty any one to be admitted to Profession before the age of twenty-five." Both were clothed privately, and in 1780 they at length "made their holy Profession, though they were only twenty-three years old; this special grant was obtained of the Empress for them by Mrs. Swinburne."*

Of Sister Aurelia Dillon the annals say "that the whole groundwork of her sanctity was a resolution she had taken and faithfully practised of believing herself to deserve nothing of God or man but punishment, pain, contempt, and reproach; consequently no one could injure or affront her. Neither as a child in the school, or as a religious, was she ever heard to return a sharp word or make a complaint either to Superiors or equals or anyone. No one ever met with a refusal or even a wry face, were they ever so importunate or ill-timed. She was like a bit of wax in the hands of Superiors, her judgement and actions knew no bent or desire but what they gave. Equal to persons and places no one could ever discern that she preferred one to another. By the perfect mastery of her passions, she appeared to have none, and nothing could extort from her a single word to repress those of others, and when she suffered therefrom she firmly believed that she alone was in fault. She sang the Divine Office with so much feeling and devotion that it excited the same in others. She was always cheerful, but her placid countenance and evenness of temper concealed the many interior trials by which Almighty God was pleased to purify this holy soul. She had many conflicts and sharp temptations, and when these came upon her, her mind was alarmed by the apprehension of the severe judgements of God, which no doubt He permitted to secure her humility. During her nine weeks' illness her piety, patience, and cheerful resignation to the Will of God edified our physician in a singular manner, as also the whole Community. She received Extreme Unction on December 27, feast of St John the Evangelist, to whom she was most particularly devoted, and died on January 9, 1803. She was in the forty-fifth year of her age. Never was a member more universally or more deservedly regretted, for the Community looked on her as a model of religious perfection."

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* Robert Dillon married a daughter of Sir Edward Swinburne of Capheaton, Northumberland. One of their sons became a General in the Austrian service and was made Governor of Milan and Baron of the Empire.

The record of such lives—entirely devoid of external incident—would soon become monotonous, yet they form the true treasure of religious communities, and we may believe that they are lives which " God will remember," for " he doth much who loveth much."* No soul can give herself as a holocaust to God, to fill up those things which are wanting to the Passion of our Redeemer, without helping " to spread the sweet odour of Jesus Christ." And surely we may trust that the prayers and sacrifices offered by a succession of such souls during three centuries will have weighed in the balance of God's mercy and have brought down his blessing on our country.

Prayer for the conversion of England and Reparation must have held a prominent place in the devotional life of all the Communities founded at the time of the nation's apostasy. Besides the frequent offering of Masses and Communions, the Canonesses still keep up the old custom of singing the Litany of the Saints for the return of England to its ancient Faith, on the feasts of St Gregory the Great and St Thomas of Canterbury, and on the last-named day, as on the first Sunday of each month, they succeed one another before the Blessed Sacrament, exposed on the altar, to beg of God to hasten the hour of His triumph. For long years as they prayed on, the clouds lowered thick and seemingly impenetrable, but now, as the white-robed nuns kneel before their Eucharistic Lord in their own country, they have the joy of seeing how at length:

" . . . the shadows break and gleams divine
Edge the dim distant line."†

The love of suffering which springs from the spirit of reparation must have been strong indeed in a humble lay-Sister who " when suffering inconceivable tortures in her whole body, for mortification set in four months before her death, yet declared to one of the sisters that she thought herself the happiest person in the Community, for she looked upon her sufferings as a favour from Heaven."

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* *Imitation of Christ*, Book I, chap. xiv.

† Cardinal Newman, " The Patient Church " (verses on various occasions).

A soul of the like spirit was Sister Anne Mary Hyde,* who united a great spirit of penance to a most tender devotion to the Infant Jesus, and to the Adorable Eucharist, which she could never receive "without being the whole morning dissolved into tears." It was her constant practice to sacrifice to God all the satisfactions she thought He required of her, and likewise all her reluctances, however great they might be, for "-she was most liberal towards God," but He is never outdone in generosity, and "from the time she did so, He wholly removed the repugnances which she overcame for His love. Thus at her first entrance into the cloister, He permitted her to feel an extreme aversion for the religious life as practised here, yet she was convinced it was the place God called her to, and therefore to secure her fidelity to His Will, she at once made her vows privately (which would not have been permitted had it been known), and God, to reward her generous sacrifice, gave her so entire a content that it exceeded all she could have thought possible. She was ever most compassionate to others, but no less severe to herself, so that after her disciplines the place was all covered with blood. She died making the most tender acts of love, confidence, and humility, even to the last moment, on a Friday, just before three in the afternoon, so that the first prayers said for her were the Cross Prayers,† to which she had a special devotion."

Another true lover of the Cross was Sister Mary Magdalen Jackson, who, only two hours before her death, when one who was attending her would have placed her more comfortably, exclaimed: "My Saviour died upon a Cross, and shall I thus seek comfort unto the end?" And Sister Mary Clare Moore, "overflowing with spiritual joy after receiving the Last Sacraments, repeated: 'I love the Cross. . . . I love my God and

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* Daughter of William Hyde of Stanlake, Esq.

† "In whatsoever place they are in the afternoon at three o'clock, they say five Paters and Aves with arms across, in honour of our Saviour's five Wounds, and at the end they say: 'O most sweet Jesus, I humbly thank thee for having suffered and died on the Cross for the love of me'" ("Customs" of the English Augustinian Nuns)

He loves me.'" During the night preceding her death, having her full consciousness, she several times asked the Prioress if she did not see Our Lord and Our Lady near her bed.

Love of the Cross is what we should expect to find in the daughters of Martyrs and the sisters of him who wrote: "In the Cross is joy of spirit, in the Cross is the height of virtue, in the Cross is the perfection of sanctity."* And these Englishwomen had been brought up in homes over which the shadow of the Cross still lay. Though the annals no longer record stories of the Martyrs, we often hear of sufferings bravely borne for Christ by their descendants.

Thus we are told of the parents of Sister Catherine Joseph Norris that "they both descended from honourable families, but on the death of her father, her mother was reduced to poverty through the anger of her relations on account of her steady adhesion to the Catholic Faith, and she would say to her children: 'I do not ask of God the riches of this world for you, but that He may bestow on you the poverty and abjection of Bethlehem.'"

The annalist goes on to recount an incident which was to mould the form of Sister Catherine's spiritual life, and may therefore be recorded here.

"This holy woman's little girl, Mary, our sister, was sent as a child to the village school, and going thither with a catechism in her hand she asked herself this question: 'Does God know and see all things?' and answering: 'Yes; He does know and see all things, even our most secret thoughts,' a doubt against our holy Faith came across her mind. She said to herself: 'I cannot think He does,' and taking hold of the edge of the bridge on which she stood, and placing her little foot so firmly that she thought no one could move her unless she herself would, she said again: 'I do not think He can, if He can let Him push me into the water.' At that moment an invisible force, for she saw nothing, took her over the side of the bridge, and she found herself on her face in the water. She got up as she could, and though very wet, made the best of her way to school, penetrated with fear, and ever after preserved a deep sense of God's Omnipotence."

From time to time there are accounts of cures reputed as miraculous, and it is noticeable that in these cases, before writing down the record, the nuns were careful "to lay the whole matter before spiritual and learned men," and to give such exact information "that all may be able to judge of them in the light both of reason and of Faith." Thus in 1719 the cure of Sister Cecily Bracy, attributed to the intercession of St Ignatius, was attested by the doctor and by "an English Dominican of Bornhem who understood Physick." But of more interest than the details of the cure are the few words on Sister Cecily's spiritual life.

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* *Imitation of Christ,* Book II, chap. xii.

She was so especially devoted to the Will of God that it is said "she seemed to have no will but His, and so perfectly did she fulfil it that no one could accuse her of a voluntary imperfection. Her confessors declared that she was an eminent servant of God, and much favoured by Him, but for fear she might take any complaisancy in herself, they made light of what she communicated to them, telling her that humility, self-abnegation, and labour were to be esteemed much more than those favours." Her death twenty years after her cure seems to have been caused by her charity towards a poor nun "who was gone from herself, with whom she shut herself up,* tending her day and night with unremitting care" till her own health completely failed, and she died the death of the Saints.

As in all convent annals we find the record of certain outward manifestations of grace, such as "a sweet smell as of fresh violets perceived both by nuns and children round a picture of Our Lady" at the time of the death of one (Sister Teresa Mannock) who had been noted for her special love of her Immaculate Mother.†

But the nuns do not seem to have dwelt much on such exterior favours. They recognized that not in them, but in a deep living Faith, lay the true significance of the life they had embraced. To enter a religious Order requires a great act of Faith, but never more so than when its members dedicate their lives to the *Laus Divina*. Like the Mass, which is the centre of the Liturgy, such lives are in very truth a " Mystery of Faith." They are a public profession "that humility and obedience and self-sacrifice are the most mighty forces that exist,"* and that the one thing necessary is that God may be honoured — " ut honorificetur Deus "; they are a declaration of absolute belief in the apostolic power of intercessory prayer and of sacrifice, united to His Sacrifice " Who is always living to make intercession for us."

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* It was thought that even in cases of insanity an enclosed nun might not be sent out of the enclosure. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century the doubt still existed, and the question was referred to Rome, from whence the answer was returned that Pope Benedict XIV had declared that "when a nun was totally mad and from herself she might be sent from her convent."

† The painting, which was once the Altar-piece, is still preserved at Bruges.

So the religious whose lives are dedicated to the solemnities of the Divine Worship "pass their days near the Tabernacle, and every day mingle a little drop of the water of their sacrifice with the true Wine of our Saviour's."†

The readiness to live henceforth a life thus hidden with Christ in God, " wholly separated from the world and with perfect abnegation of themselves," is the test required by the Constitutions of Windesheim, whereby to judge whether the novice be capable of that form of religious perfection which their observance postulates.

Before concluding this chapter it may be well to say a few words about those charged with the spiritual direction of the English Augustinian Canonesses.

The Reverend Peter Guilday, in his *English Catholic Refugees on the Continent*, refers to " the care taken by the presidents of the English College, Douay, and the English Provincials of the Society of Jesus to furnish the Convent with able spiritual directors," and adds, " the importance of this factor in the life of the Community cannot be too highly estimated."‡

We have seen how, about the year 1559, the right of Visitation at St Ursula's was transferred from the Prior of Bethlehem to a delegate appointed by the Bishop. The Canons Regular continued to act as confessors to the nuns, but evidently the freedom which St Teresa so insisted on for her daughters was not denied to the Augustinian Canonesses, for we hear of the spiritual ministrations of a Carmelite Friar, and Father Gerard, S.J., writes in his autobiography that Sister Dorothy Rookwood,* whom he had sent overseas, "had praised me so much beyond my due in that convent (St Ursula's) that when I came to Louvain numbers flocked to me." When the English nuns separated from their Flemish Sisters it became necessary for them to have English Confessors, but the most friendly relations were maintained with the Canons Regular. Thus, in 1652 "there being then no Bishop at Ypres," the Abbot elect of the Monastery of the Canons Regular near that town was consecrated in the Church of the Cloister of Nazareth, Bruges, with great solemnity, and we find mention of "my Lord Abbot of Eeckhout" as being present at many of the Convent ceremonies.

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* Bishop Hedley.

† See *The Contemplative Life*, by a Carthusian Monk (Burns Oates and Washbourne, London).

‡ In more recent times the Bishops of Bruges have appointed Belgian confessors knowing English well, and no less care has been taken in the choice. Of the four Belgian priests who have been chaplains to the English Convent, one was the Abbé De Foere, who, in 1830, was a member of the deputation sent to offer the crown of Belgium to Leopold I. Another was the Flemish poet, Guido Gezelle, who died in the " Father's House " in 1899, saying: "I am quite happy; it seems to me that I have always lived *in simplicitate cordis et veritate*." When his body was carried from the Convent to the Cathedral, dense crowds lined the streets and the funeral of the humble and holy poet-priest assumed the character of a triumph.

But the nuns most naturally turned for spiritual help to the English Jesuits who were exiles like themselves. They were generally chosen as "extraordinary confessors," and they have ever befriended the Convent from the memorable day when, in 1620, the English nuns left St Ursula's for their new foundation, and on the way "there met them the Rector of the English College and gave them two great tarts and a little piece of gold of half a crown to begin house withal."

Under the government of Mother Lucy Herbert, her own director, Father Lewis Sabran, was frequently consulted in all difficulties, and he introduced the custom of a yearly public renewal of vows.

The influence of the Jesuits is seen in many details, as, for instance, in the great devotion to St Francis Xavier, favours being frequently attributed to the pious practice of honouring him during ten consecutive Fridays. To the Jesuits, too, the Community perhaps owes its having been kept free from all taint of Jansenistic error, and the grace of having been among the first to take up the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

As we have seen, this devotion was not unknown in

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* Father Gerard says of her: "She gave such edification both in life and death that she was the talk of all; nay, they still speak of her with wonder, and stick not to call her a saint" (*Life of Father John Gerard, S.J.*, by Father John Morris, S.J., p. 99. Burns and Oates).

PAINTING IN THE BRUGES NOVICESHIP

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the Congregation of Windesheim,* but it was God's design that it should be established in the Church at large by the Revelations granted to St Margaret Mary, and only twelve years after her death (1690) a painting was executed for the altar in the Bruges Noviceship, before which it became the custom of the Community to assemble every year on May 30 to recite the Litanies of the Heart of Jesus. A reproduction of the picture is here given; the nun kneeling in adoration is Sister Helen Andrews, Mistress of Novices, in whom was verified the promise of Our Lord to St Margaret Mary that "fervent souls who promote devotion to His Heart shall quickly attain to great perfection." Of Sister Helen we are told that "from the beginning she was admirable in virtue and that her life was spent in continual mortification and prayer."

Reverend Mother Lucy Herbert had been familiar with the devotion from her childhood, for Father de la Colombière, its earliest apostle, was well known to her parents, and they must have been among those of our countrymen who heard the burning words by which he kindled the sacred flame in the heart of Mary of Modena, preaching before her in the Chapel Royal of St James's. "Our Queen," as the Chronicler calls her, was the first sovereign to petition the Holy See for the institution of a feast in honour of the Sacred Heart.

In 1766 we read in the annals: "On the Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, almost all the Community was enrolled in the Association of the Heart of Jesus, established at the College of the English Jesuits in our town, by Father Lawson, then Rector." The "almost all" is suggestive; no doubt there were still two or three nuns who, like some of Sister Margaret Mary's own sisters at Paray-le-Monial, looked on all outward manifestation of the devotion as "a novelty."

Troubled days were in store for the Community, but the protection of the Sacred Heart brought it safely through the storms of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth.

When the hour of greatest trial came and the nuns were obliged to leave their much-loved cloister, they may have found strength and consolation in the words Mother Herbert had left them in her *Meditations on the Passion :*

"Let Christ's most Holy Side be your receptacle, your constant habitation, your Temple to pray in, and your Heaven to rest in for ever. Fly to His Sacred Wounds whenever tempted, afflicted or troubled. . . . He has opened a window to His Sacred Heart through which we might penetrate to It and see the Heart of God wounded for us, with this inscription on It: God is dead for love of you."

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* See Part I, pp. 77, 78.

X

TROUBLED TIMES

(1745–1794)

At various times in the course of the eighteenth century the English Canonesses were able to help other communities who, owing to war or persecution, were obliged to leave their houses.

The first mentioned are " the Nuns of the Order of Our Lady's Conception who, in the September of 1745, fled from Ostend by reason that the French besieged the town.*

" Our Community had great compassion on them in their affliction, and showed them all kindness possible. They had leave of the Bishop to come into our enclosure, and dined at a round table in the middle of our Refectory, the Abbess sitting next to our Reverend Mother."

The French were soon masters of Flanders, and after the battle of Fontenoy, Louis XV entered Bruges and was welcomed by the magistrates and people, for there was a growing dissatisfaction with the Austrian Government. We find the following entry in the Convent Annals:

" We, being now under the French, the King of France was received into our town with great rejoicings.

" On June 30 the Dauphin of France† came to see our Church after Compline. We all put on our surplices and went to the Lay-sisters' Chapel. After he had viewed the Altar he came up to the grate to us and behaved in a very obliging manner. The chapel gates were opened for him, which he seemed to expect, and he came in with about half a dozen of his followers, but gave orders no more should enter. He stood and talked to us for about quarter of an hour, and then went away. Our bell was ordered to be rung from his first coming into the street till he was quite out of it."

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* During the War of the Austrian Succession, Marshal Lowendahl (a Dane, then in the service of France) took Ostend, which was only given up by the French at the end of the war, in 1748.

† Father of Louis XVI.

This was a few days after Prince Charlie had sailed for his brave venture to recover his father's kingdom, an expedition to which the French were friendly, though they gave no practical help. The tone in the passage of the annals just quoted contrasts with that of the notice concerning the visit in 1756 of members of the Austrian Imperial family, which had never shown any favour to the Stuart cause:

"*June 25th.*—Prince Charles, Brother to the Emperor (Francis of Lorraine, husband of the Empress-Queen, Maria Theresa) whose representative he is at his court at Brussels, came to town with his sister Charlotte, Abbess of Remiremont.* They, with their attendants, were lodged at the Bishop's Palace, and all came one morning at about nine of the clock to see our church. The noise, the number and their great retinue were such as to frighten the Carme who was just going to begin Mass, so much that the server was obliged to tell him what it was. No less were we in the Choir surprised, having had no notice given of their coming. They soon went away, as we thought and hoped for good, but in time of our dinner, my Lord Bishop came and sent to our refectory to our Reverend Mother to say that her Royall Highness was coming with him to see our inclosure. Accordingly in about quarter of an hour her Royall Highness, with my Lord Bishop, the Grand Maitre, and several Ladys of her court entered. Her Highness behaved very courteously; at her first entrance our Rd. Mo. asked the Honour to kiss her hand, wch she immediately permitted, as also to Subprioress, who accompanied Rd. Mo. They went away in about half an hour, seeming pleased, and we as much when they were gone."

But the Community was soon to be called upon to help the victims of persecutions inaugurated by both the French and Austrian Governments.

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* This great Benedictine Abbey was founded in Lorraine in 650. In 1515 the nuns, who had ceased to observe the Rule, adopted the status of Secular Canonesses. Only the daughters of the nobility were received, and the Abbesses were recognized as Princesses of the Empire. In 1658 Marie-Anne of Lorraine was Abbess at the age of six. How far the spirit of the world had penetrated what was once a fervent religious community may be judged of by the fact that one of the Apostolic Visitors insisted that the inmates of the Abbey ought not to blush to acknowledge that it had once belonged to the Benedictine Order, as no one of them would blush were it proved that she were of even higher lineage than that which she claimed! The last titular Abbess of Remiremont was the holy Princess Louise de Condé, aunt to the young duc d'Enghien, shot at Vincennes in 1804.

In August, 1762, is the following entry:

"The English Jesuits being banished from France* came into the Queen's dominions, being much invited by the magistrates of this town; they came a few at a time, their students also in different companies which was judged more safe. We helped them all we could by sending some beds, chairs, tables and what else we could pick up throughout the house, for their present convenience."

The account books show that the Convent likewise lent them 3,000 florins. A narrative written by one of these Fathers from St Omer says: "What required hands and time to be fitted for service was generously supplied by the Flemish Austin Friars and the two English Convents of Nuns."†

Ten years later the suppression of the Society to whom the Community owed so much is thus referred to:

"His Holiness, Clement XIV, this year published a Bull for the suppression of the Order of the Society of Jesus; in consequence of it the two colleges here at Bruges‡ were seized by the government at Brussels on the 20th of September. Mr. Berington our Confessor, was appointed President of the Little College, which disagreeable commission he accepted purely out of friendship to Mr. Aston, who was principal of that house. The Bishop and commissaries required of him to lodge there every night, which he did till the 14th of this month (Oct.). About 6 o'clock of the evening of that day, without a moment's warning, all the Superiors and Masters were removed out of both Colleges. Those who were not in Orders had the choice of being confined with the Rectors and Priests, or to leave the town in 24 hours. In this distress, Reverend Mother§ sent to offer bed and board to all those who chose to withdraw, which they accepted. We hired all the rooms at the Miller's, and filled all our outward apartments with beds on the floor, as we had no better convenience. Mr. Berington kindly allowed the same in his chamber. He behaved in the most handsome manner in the whole affair, and joined with Reverend Mother in giving all the succour and comfort possible both to the distressed gentlemen and to their students, for which kindness Mr. More the Provincial (who was Reverend Mother's brother) and the parents of the students, expressed the warmest gratitude. Two old lay-Brothers,—viz., Brother Tucker and Brother Thomas Padbury—being allowed to stay in town they tabled with us till they could be otherwise disposed of."

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* On August 6 the French Parliament had issued a decree declaring the Order of the Jesuits to be "inadmissible in any civilized State." There were at the time 4,000 Jesuits in France, and no less than eighty-four houses were suppressed. (See *The Jesuits: Their Foundation and History*, by B. N., p. 208. Burns and Oates.)

† The other English Community here alluded to is that of the Franciscan Nuns, now settled at Taunton in Somersetshire.

‡ The "Great College" was in the Rue Haute, and the "Little College" on the Quai du Miroir.

§ Reverend Mother Mary Augustina More succeeded Mother Olivia Darrell as seventh Prioress in 1766. She was daughter of Thomas More of Barnborough and of Catherine, daughter to John Gifford of Black-Ladies. Mother More was eighth in descent from the

In Brother Foley's *Records*[*] he gives extracts from an account written by Father Plowden, S.J., who tells of the sudden arrival at the Great College of the Austrian Commissioners; they instituted a search, recalling those of the English pursuivants in the preceding century; during a whole morning they probed every wall, ceiling, beam, desk, etc. On October 14, the feast of St Donatian, the Patron of the Diocese, the Fathers were expelled and a company of soldiers took possession of the College and dragooned the high-spirited English boys, little disposed to brook such treatment and incapable of maintaining the quiet dignity with which their masters bore the affronts put on them,[†] Austrian

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martyred Chancellor, a fact thus alluded to in some pompous Latin verses, composed on the occasion of her Jubilee of fifty years in religion (1803) by the Chaplain, the Rev. Andrew Oliver. He begins as follows:

> " Eloquar an sileam MORI de stirpe MARIAM
> Martyrio plus conspicui quam sanguine Patrum?"

Having decided to speak, he continues:

> "Igitur . . . eloquar . . . at timidus ! balbutio dicens:"

and proceeds to declare that the object of his verses exceeds Judith and Jahel in fortitude !

A vertebra of the neck of Blessed Thomas More, still preserved at Bruges, was left to the Convent by Mother More; she also possessed the Martyr's Rosary ring, now belonging to the Trappes family. (See for an account of the More Relics Dom Bede Camm's *Forgotten Shrines*, pp. 349-356.)

[*] Series XIII, part i.

[†] Hugh Clifford (later fifth Lord Clifford) was ordered by a commissary "to go and call the Rector as he had need of him immediately," to which the boy answered "that he was not a servant to be sent on his messages." Another student was sent to prison for striking a soldier.

soldiers were put on guard with fixed bayonets, and lay-brothers from the madhouse were sent to help them to keep the wild English lads in order! But shortly after the removal of the Fathers a mob gathered round the house, and a scene of riot and confusion ensued. The boys flew to the gates, but were driven back by the soldiers. In their excitement and resentment they broke everything in the house, and then some escaped through the windows, or by climbing over the walls, while others daringly forced their way through the guards and rushed up and down the street, looking for their masters.

Many of the boys, thus separated from those to whom their parents had entrusted them, must have been nephews of the nuns or brothers of the girls educated at the English Convent. The Rev. Thomas Berington ran to tell Mother More of what was happening: "He found her," says Father Plowden, "in preparation and almost overwhelmed with grief. He seconded, and was even beforehand with her generous charity, gathering into the outbuildings of the Augustinian Convent as many of the scholars as he could withdraw from the hands of the soldiers, who continued to guard the two houses. He procured for them diet and lodgings, advanced money to several for their immediate wants, and ransomed many from the commissioners, who had express orders from the Privy Council to detain them all, until the last item should be paid of all they owed their ancient masters on the score of pensions, etc. This charitable religious and her chaplain thus liberated many by advancing the requisite sums; they sent notice of what had happened to England; they conveyed through the sentries at the Flemish College many tokens of friendship and temporary relief to the prisoners; they insisted upon their taking immediate refuge at the Convent, as soon as their persecutors should have released them from confinement."

The good Father who writes the account here exclaims in his gratitude: "The Society must ever regard the truly charitable Prioress with the same sentiments of respect and gratitude, which the Roman Senate testified to the Venusian Matron, who at her own cost harboured the remains of a Roman army after the defeat at Cannae."

It seems to have been Mother More's lot to have been made the subject of comparisons which raise a smile by their grandiloquence, but God gave her great opportunities to exercise her charity, and she was to display fortitude not unworthy of the descendant of a martyr, when her own Community was forced to flee from hospitable Bruges. Father Plowden continues his account of how, when the Jesuits were sent to England, three were retained as hostages and were shut up in the large empty house. "After a while they discovered a hole in the wall of the garden-cellar, and having managed to inform their friends of it, letters were dropped in at night in which Mother More gave them news of what was passing in town and also in England." At length the hostages were removed to Ghent, and were finally ordered to return to England.

"On their first arrival at Ghent the Prioress (Mother More) procured for the prisoners a secret means of correspondence, with a supply of their more immediate wants; and on the eve of their departure Mr. Berington unexpectedly arrived in Ghent, found means to gain access to them during the night, and presented them from Mrs. More with a purse of £50 in gold. Not being in urgent need the Fathers declined this generous offer, but could only do so on condition that they should use her credit to supply their necessities until they were tranquilly settled. They affectionately parted with Mr. Berington in the middle of the night."

An attempt to place their College at Bruges under the direction of English Dominicans from Bornhem had failed signally, owing to the boys' refusal to accept any but their old masters, whom they afterwards followed to Liège and ultimately to Stonyhurst.

The nuns looked after old Brother Thomas Padbury till his death in 1792, lodging him in the gardener's house. He did little services for the Convent, and gave great edification by his fidelity to all the rules of his former state in as far as he could still observe them.

In 1783 Mother More was interviewed by an imperial commissary, "who examined her most strictly concerning the effects of the English Jesuits, for she was accused to have sent off for them to a considerable value. She denied the charge with a firmness that innocence alone could inspire; he tried to intimidate her, but to no effect. He also demanded a new inventory of our rents to be sent to him that very night. This unexpected visit, accusation and demand alarmed us exceedingly and also all our friends, but thank God we heard no more of that business."

In 1781 Joseph II visited Bruges, and the Monasteries of the Carthusians, the Carmelites, the Poor Clares and others were suppressed by his orders. For the spiritual daughters of Margaret Clement it was a joy and a privilege, which seemed theirs by right, to offer shelter to the last Prior of the Carthusians of Sheen Anglorum at Nieuport—the representatives of those martyred "Fathers of the Charterhouse" whom Mrs. Clement had succoured at Newgate, and who had stood around her when the hour of her own death came.

We read in the annals in 1783:

"Upon the suppression of the English Carthusians at Nieuport, Mr. Williams, their holy Prior, gratefully accepted Revd Mother's invitation to an apartment here and boarding with us. He arrived on the 30th of this month, and continues to practise his Rule as far as circumstances permit, and as he never eats meat, we provide Lenten diet for him. He gives great edification by his retirement and assiduity in the Church and his recollected behaviour there."

In a letter written at this time Prior Williams says: "The trial is severe, but God is infinitely good in somewhat lightening the Cross by the kindness I meet with from *Mrs. More and her whole family*."* He did not, however, stay long at Bruges, for having gone on October 22 to pay a visit to the English Dominicans at Bornhem he resolved to remain with them, but afterwards went to the Canonesses at Louvain, and in 1793 accompanied them to England, dying at Little Malvern four years later. "With him," says Dom Lawrence Hendriks, "died out the remnant of the English Carthusians, which owed to Maurice Chauncy its unbroken succession from the martyred heroes of the London Charter House."†

The Bruges Canonesses also gave a refuge to two Carthusian "Donati," Brothers James Orford and Thomas Carfoot. The latter is spoken of at some length in the annals, his fervour and piety having won general esteem. He died on May 19, 1786, "universally regretted by the community and all that knew him."

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* This was the usual way of designating religious Superiors and their Communities in letters to England at a period when the penal laws might still be enforced.

† *The London Charterhouse*, p. 347 (Kegan Paul, Trench and Co.). In it Dom Lawrence says that it is not known at what date Prior Williams left Bruges for Bornhem nor when Brother Thomas Carfoot died. The annals of the English Convent supply the missing data.

Brother Orford followed the Community to England, and died in 1797 at Hengrave Hall, where they were settled. He, too, edified the nuns by his piety, but "the good old brother being somewhat rough in his temper was not beloved by all abroad." Thus the two last Carthusians of Sheen Anglorum were laid to rest in English ground.

In 1784 two Communities, near neighbours of the Canonesses, were suppressed, that of the Penitents and of the nuns of Bethania. "Reverend Mother did all in her power to solace and comfort them; on the day of the sale of the goods of their convent, in order to spare them so afflicting and affecting a scene, she took those who had been unable to find shelter except in a little house in their own court where they were cooped up for five weeks, into our enclosure, and they greatly edified us by their truly religious sentiments."

The English Convent itself only escaped suppression owing to the fact of its having a school attached to it, but alarms were frequent. In August, 1789, we read:

"As we have been for several years in continual fears of being suppressed we sent off secretly our plate and papers into French Flanders, partly in 1786 and partly in 1787—viz., to the Ursulines at Tourcoing and the English Poor Clares at Dunkirk, who very kindly received them in trust. As a great revolution in France began last month which threatened the clergy and religious houses, we feared for the security of our Church plate, and having little prospect of tranquillity for ourselves in these countries, it was settled to sell it and invest the money in England to buy new plate when the troubles should be over." It was accordingly sent to a French gentleman at St Omer's, a Mr. Dourlen, but when he saw its beauty he advised the nuns not to sell it, and with their consent "he deposited it very secretly in the house of a trusty friend of his at Lille."

The annals during the following years make mention from time to time of the vexatious measures which rendered Joseph II so unpopular in Catholic and liberty-loving Belgium that within a short period the "Révolution Brabançonne" broke out and the independence of "the United States of Belgium"* was proclaimed.

In 1786 it had been forbidden to bury within the towns of the Emperor's dominions, and the Canonesses had to give up their custom of burying within the enclosure. The first time that the coffin of one of the Sisters was carried out "tears prevented our being able to pursue the *In Paradisum* which we were then singing, and the people in the Church had great compassion on us."

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* "États-Belgiques-Unis": in evident imitation of the name, "United States of America," assumed after the Declaration of Independence in 1786.

That same year the Procession for Corpus Christi had to be omitted "on account of an edict of the Emperor for reducing the number of processions." In 1787 it was allowed (but on Tuesday instead of on the Octave day), "the Archduchess Christina having ratified the privileges of these countries, but they were re-established for a short space only as the Emperor would not confirm what she had done."

In 1789 the age fixed for religious Profession by the imperial "sacristan" was changed from twenty-five to twenty-four. So the interferences with civil and religious liberty went on till, at the close of 1789, the Revolution broke out. On December 16 the Annals record that "By order of the Bishop all the convents of this diocese, two at a time, had the 40 hours' Prayer to implore the divine Mercy for appeasing the troubles of the country," and on February 16, 1790, "Four gentlemen from the States of Flanders called, begging Revd. Mother to contribute to a collection for the poor who had suffered at the siege of Ghent and its castle in ye month of November, 1789, and she gave them 4 louis d'or."

"In April a patriotic subscription being opened in Flanders for the maintenance of the soldiers for the army we engaged to pay for 3 soldiers during one year at ten pence a day for each"; and again, "On ye 10th of June 3 gentlemen came to desire we would give to a patriotic subscription for the expense of 3 cannons this town was to offer to the Congress. Revd. Mother presented them with eight louis d'or, in gratitude to Al^{ty} God and to the Magistrates for the unalterable peace we, with the rest of the town, have enjoyed through their vigilance and the constant fatiguing guard the burghers kept from the beginning of the Revolution wch began last November."

On November 17, 1790, "we had a solemn high Mass and *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the Revolution, it being the anniversary day of this town's being given up to the patriots, the Mass was in *faux-bourdon*."

But, oh, "the slippery turns" of fortune! only a month later we read: "We were obliged to illuminate and there were other rejoicings in the town for these provinces being again returned to the obedience of the Emperor."

Joseph II died a few weeks after the Revolution in Brabant; his brother, Leopold II, offered favourable terms to the Provinces, but they were not accepted, and the Austrians recovered their lost dominions by arms. In 1792, after the battle of Jemappes, the French entered Bruges, but the Austrians returned in the spring of 1793, only to be again driven from Belgium after the French victory at Fleurus in 1794.

From the year 1792 the Convent had constantly received refugees from France, which was then under the sway of Robespierre.

" In September a French priest, curé of Longuenisse, arrived; Reverend Mother offered him an asylum from the persecution of the clergy in France, he being ancient and lame." The same month an English Capuciness from St Omer's, and in October " three choir nuns and a lay-sister, Benedictines, turned out of their monastery at Montargis, arrived here from England, where they were obliged to land in order to get to Brussels. They stayed one night, laid in the Infirmary, and set off the next morning for Ghent on their road to Brussels. They were of four different nations—viz., English, Irish, Scotch, and Flemish."

The Community of Montargis (founded from the Abbey of Montmartre in 1630) was the first to seek refuge on English soil during the French Revolution. The vessel in which the nuns sailed had taken twenty-six hours to cross the Channel from Dieppe, and they had been obliged to disembark at Shoreham. They were most kindly received at Brighton by Mrs. Fitzherbert, wife of the Prince of Wales, who, no doubt at her desire, visited the exiles and urged them to remain in England. They followed his advice, and are now settled at Princethorpe. The four religious who had gone to Brussels passed again through Bruges on November 5; " they set off on the 7th, and at Reverend Mother's request took the French priest with them, for as the French were then expected here she wished to have the old gentleman in security. He was received in England by Mrs. Corney, sister to our Sister Louisa Mawhood.*

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* Sister Louisa Austin Mawhood was elected Prioress on the death of Mother More; she was the first who was not elected for life, but only for a term of three years. This arrangement had been proposed

"On December 27 the only remaining nun of Montargis, Dame Dillon, arrived here on her way to England in order to join her community, then settled at Bodney in Norfolk. She set off the next day with her sister, Lady Jerningham."

There came also a "nun from the French Austins at Paris, a Capuciness from Bergues, and our community fed nine French priests constantly at the confessor's table, and beds were put up in the outward for as many as we could lodge, but on the 9th of November all the French priests left us for fear of the French troops of that new republic who had possession of these countries. Reverend Mother procured for one of them to be received by the nuns at York, and three more by her own relations and friends—viz., Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Waterton, and Mr. Sulyard. The vanguard of the French came two days after their departure."

"About the middle of December the Magistrates sent workmen to build stables on the outside of the north wall of our garden for the French Marsellois Dragoons, who were expected."

But God raised up friends for the nuns, and throughout all this period their enclosure was respected, though the Marseillais broke into the neighbouring convent of Spermalie. One of the Generals in the French Army, an Irishman, O'Moran by name, protected the two English Convents, and "a burgher of this town, Mr. Bareel, being of the Jacobin club here, had great influence with the commissaries," and used it in behalf of the nuns, so that they alone had no soldiers billeted on them. Nevertheless it was thought wise to hide or send off all their best pictures* and papers of importance.

In January, 1793, the annalist writes:

"We began this year with little comfort and many fears, as the French showed themselves very despotic, and their proceedings with regard to convents were such that we had reason to fear being obliged to leave these

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to the nuns on other occasions but had been rejected, but Mother More having been confined to her room for two years before her death, they had realized the inconvenience which might result from a life tenure of office.

* The Convent possesses many fine paintings. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, these were again sent away to a place of safety. Among them are a St John of the Cross by Murillo, a St Francis of Assisi by Teniers, the Disciples of Emmaus by Caravaggio, a Sasso Ferrato, a Carlo Dolci, the Triumph of the Cross by Rubens, and many others of the Flemish school.

countries, and resolved, in that case, to seek shelter in England." Mother More wrote to Mr. Blundell of Ince, brother of our Sister Mary Joseph, to beg him to find a house for us. He proposed Moor Hall or Puddington, both belonging to the Stanley family.*

Orders were sent to the English banker of the Convent "not to honour any bills Reverend Mother might send him from these countries, for she feared the commissaries might oblige her to draw money from England."

The March of 1793 was marked by frequent alternatives of hope and fear. "On the 22nd we were assured that the French had left the town for good, and that it had narrowly escaped being plundered before they departed. This news revived our spirit and those of the inhabitants in general, who impatiently expected the arrival of the Austrian troops; in the meantime we thought ourselves secure and happy.

"On the 29th, being Good Friday, about eight in the morning we heard a drum on the ramparts near us which cheered our hearts, supposing it to belong to the imperialist troops; part of them marched through our street, but we were soon informed they were French and that all the churches in the town were immediately shut up for fear of profanations. These troops took again possession of the town, seizing the gates, the bridges, etc.; they were about two thousand in number and required a contribution of two million florins or the plunder of the town for four hours. Our Jacobin magistrates, who were friends to them, had sufficient honour to refuse the latter and sign for the first, for which many of them were carried off by the French as hostages.

"During the night they let in two thousand more of their own troops, and, notwithstanding the aforesaid agreement, they intended to pillage the town, but by God's special Providence, the Commandant of the last troop told the first that they had not a moment to lose as the Austrians were advancing, whereupon they made their preparations in great haste.

"The day before they had loaded some Cutters with part of the immense magazines they had laid up here, worth two millions of florins, but the populace would not suffer them to depart, abused the French and threw dirt and stones at them. They left at about two o'clock on Holy Saturday morning, and the next day about nine in the morning the Austrian vanguard of only nine men entered the town to the inexpressible joy of the inhabitants; the bells were rung and illuminations ordered for the night, but about two in the afternoon our joy was damped by the notice given that the French were returning upon us, breathing vengeance and with the fixed resolution to reduce the town to ashes. The churches were again shut up and all the burghers under arms. A great part of them went out to assist the peasants, who, with about two hundred Austrians, were driving them back as far as Newport, but having no cannon the French returned and fired upon them, which drove our people back again. In the meantime news was brought of the first defeat of the French, on which the rejoicings and illuminations went on till eleven and a half. Our nuns and lay-sisters that sat up to attend to the candles, had just extinguished them, when they were very much terrified by the tolling of all the alarm bells, both in the town and country, and a report soon reached us that the French were at the gates. About midnight some of our friends who lived in that part of the town where the French were expected to enter, took refuge at our convent. The people began to unpave the streets, and orders were given to throw stones at them if they entered, but by God's mercy about five in the morning we had the comfortable news that they were drove back a second time as far as Newport, where they stayed till after Low Sunday, and were chased off our territory by the brave Austrians."

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* Sister Mary Joseph Blundell was daughter of Robert Blundell of Ince and of Catherine, youngest daughter of Sir Rowland Stanley. The Stanleys afterwards added the name of Massey to their own, having inherited Puddington Hall, Cheshire, from Sir William Massey.

During this year, in spite of the troubled state of the Low Countries, fugitives from France continued to arrive; priests were again lodged, and others "came daily to the confessor's table, the nuns being content to live more poorly to concur to their maintenance, and good Mr. Oliver almost stripped himself in shirts, stockings, etc., to clothe them." Religious women, a Benedictine, a Dominicaness, an Annonciade, a Capuciness, etc., were taken into the Convent till they could join their own Order.

England being at this time allied with Austria, we hear of the visits of the sons of George III, of whom the nuns were now willing and loyal subjects, and these princes were perhaps glad to show kindliness to the daughters of families, which, though submissive, were still far from enthusiastic in their feelings towards the Hanoverian dynasty.

"On ye 19th of April the Duke of York honoured us with a visit; he was accompanied by our Bishop and Colonel St Leger. We received him in our surplices at the lay-sisters' chapel grate; at his entry into the church the bell rang and the organ played. A genteel dessert adorned with flowers was prepared in the Nuns' work-room. The Duke stayed only about half an hour, having the night before received orders to set off with his fine troops. He left us to head them at the market place, where they were ready waiting for him, and about two hours later Colonel St Leger came from him with a present of 25 louis d'or. We heard afterwards that His Royal Highness was very well satisfied with the reception we gave him. Our nuns made for him afterwards a very handsome sword knot and bouquets of silver and silk for his Duchess, which were most graciously received."

In 1794 Prince Ernest and Prince Adolphus entered several times; the latter coming unexpectedly one evening, he and the officers with him "went to the refectory during supper, and seemed much pleased and amused."

"Wishing to show Prince Adolphus the same respect we had shown to his brother, the Duke of York, we presented him with a breakfast in the sick-house, it being the only large room in which we could have a fire. They were as easy with Mr. Oliver as if he had been an equal, and Prince Ernest made him a present of a very handsome cane. On the 22nd they came to take leave of us, as they were to depart the next day. They brought several ladies and gentlemen with them into the convent, and expressed themselves much obliged for the civilities received, and Reverend Mother thanked them for the honour they had done us."

Meanwhile the alarms continued. In October, 1793, "the French made progress towards us by the taking of Menin and Furnes, where they seized all the English and their effects, which they said they had orders to do in every town they should take. They also made a furious attack upon Newport, and were expected immediately at Bruges, if they succeeded. Colonel Doyle, the commandant of the English troops in the town, was most extremely kind to us, promised to give us some hours' notice for our departure, and wished us to have all our goods packed up, ready to leave; we put them upon carts, and every moment expected to mount them ourselves, for other carriages were not to be had, and in that bad season we intended to flee to Sluys in Holland. Thus we were situated from noon till ten that night, and during that interval we frequently sent Sister Eugenia Randall [a lay-Sister] to the Colonel, who, though overwhelmed with affairs of the greatest importance, always received her with the tenderness of a father. Sometimes he sent us word we had 8 hours to prepare, at another only 4, and the last time only two. But by God's great mercy we were saved the affliction of leaving our Convent by the arrival of new forces from England, who repulsed the French when the troops in Newport were reduced to their last shot, and were only 800 against many thousands of the enemy. The Colonel came himself to confirm the joyful news. However, we still live in fear, and keep all our goods packed up in large trunks which are all about the lower part of the house."

In April, 1794, some of these trunks were sent to Sluys, for "the sudden taking of Courtrai gave great alarm, there being no troops between us and that town, for all the forces were drawn from the Provinces to strengthen the great army, so that we were left exposed to the French, yet we still hoped, as few or none judged they would venture so far into the country. The Emperor's troops had also had several advantages in different places, but on the 1st of May thousands of the inhabitants were flying and we in the utmost consternation, not knowing what step to take.

"The reluctance we felt to leave our enclosure, where we had vowed to live and die, made us wish to stay, but the dread of being exposed to the brutality of the French soldiers made us earnest for a place of safety. In this dilemma we applied to our Bishop, who sent us orders to seek our security with all speed, upon which we dressed directly in the secular clothes we had prepared. No carriage could be procured, except one chaise to convey Reverend Mother and Sister Mary Baptist Barton, who was in a dying condition. They set off about one in the afternoon; the others were to follow, some on foot, and those who could not walk in the gardeners' carts, loaded with baggage. But the news that afternoon was so variable that they did not start till the quarter before seven; the day was then far spent and no moon; soon after they set off it began to rain violently. There were three Jubilarians (over fifty years in religion) with others old and infirm in these creeping carts. Mr. Oliver walked by them, using every effort to strengthen and comfort his flock. Those who walked advanced much faster than the carts, but unhappily losing their road, were wet to the skin when they joined the rest on whom the rain had equally fallen through the linen covers of the carts. They all met at about eleven o'clock at night at a poor miserable half-way house, and were obliged to remain in a room where there was only one bench and four or five chairs for fifty-three persons, all wet and shivering with cold. They got a fire and sat the Jubilarians at it; no refreshment could be got except black bread and bad water, but happily they had a little tea with them. The company was sometimes most disagreeably augmented by several half-drunken fellows coming in, besides fugitives of both sexes, whom they found in beds in different parts of the room; in these circumstances each one of the community seemed calm and serene. At break of day, about three and a half, they again began their march, and reached Sluys about six in the morning. They found Sister Mary Baptist lodged at the Catholic Curate's house; Reverend Mother hastened to meet them, and tears of joy flowed on both sides to see one another again."

The nuns were settled in two different houses by the kind offices of a friend (Mr. Cornette). A lay-Sister, Sister Martha Ferguson, and a "courageous Flemish woman" had remained at Bruges, but four days after the arrival of the Community at Sluys they heard that "the magistrates of Bruges had thoughts of taking our Convent for a hospital, whereupon four of our young nuns, who were able to flee upon foot to Sluys again if a sudden alarm happened, returned to Bruges to keep possession. By the Bishop's orders the rest were to remain at Sluys till sufficient troops were sent for the protection of Flanders. When affairs appeared better we returned in small companies, and on the 4th of June we were all once more in our dear convent, where by absence we discovered new charms and were filled with greater fear than ever of losing again our little paradise, for all was so critical at our happy reunion there, that we were like persons saved from a wreck who still feared the storm would drive them from their place of safety."

Mother More was obliged to send away two of the nuns from other Orders who had sought refuge with them, and had accompanied them to Sluys, though "they left us with great regret, being very desirous of staying, and even of going to England with us. They went to the Countess of Fruges in Maestricht, who was aunt to one of them."

The rest at Bruges was but short; on June 14 news came that Ypres was taken, "which gave the French free entrance into Flanders, and that evening, between eight and nine, we were given notice that the enemy was just upon us. Mr. Serdobbel, a worthy and most Christian magistrate, and Mr. Bareel, a Jacobin, but our old protector, sent us news that no time was to be lost, but to fly immediately. We intended to have returned to Sluys, but that very night they advised us to go to Antwerp and remain there to see the event. They wished us to leave some ancient sisters at the Convent, but no young ones, for at Courtrai those monasteries that had done so were left unmolested, but such as were empty were pillaged by the French." Reverend Mother left to the option of the old and elderly nuns and Sisters to go or stay. The Doctor declared Sister Mary Baptist was too near her end to travel; Sister Olivia Darell therefore begged she might stay to attend her, and four Choir nuns and four lay-Sisters also remained. One of these latter, who was a great sufferer from rheumatism and had endured much pain in coming and going from Sluys, "declared to Reverend Mother that she would rather stay and be guillotined by the French than remove.

"We left Bruges on the 15th of June, being the feast of the Blessed Trinity. Mr. Oliver said Mass at two in the morning, at which we communicated and then breakfasted, dressed in secular, and set off at about four for Ghent. We secured a coach for Reverend Mother and two or three of the infirm; the rest went in carts. Besides our own community we had two French priests (Mr. Dourlen and Mr. Saingevin), la Mère de St Benoit Legier, an Ursuline, and four English pensioners.

"At Ghent we could find no place, the inns and lodging houses being full of fugitives; after searching up and down we went to the English Benedictine Dames,* who received us with the most cordial charity and affection, and lodged us in the best manner they could. We set off for Antwerp the next morning at seven, leaving the poor Benedictine Dames packing up their goods for flight also.

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* Now at Oulton.

"We were obliged to cross the River Scheldt, and were much insulted by the rabble when we landed, but a worthy gentleman got us out of the crowd to his own house and sent for coaches to carry us to the English Teresians,* who received us with open arms and treated us with the utmost kindness. Several of these nuns would not admit of a refusal, but insisted on giving up their cells to some of ours, the rest of us laid three or four on the ground in different rooms.

"A few days after we arrived the Lady Abbess of Ghent and three or four of her nuns came there also; therefore, to make place nine of ours went to the English Teresians at Lierre.† The Superior had given us a kind invitation, and our members met with the same cordial treatment. We boarded our four pensioners with Mère St Benoit at a school in Antwerp. We were vastly pleased with the confidence Mrs. Arden, the Abbess of Ghent, showed us, and when we parted it was with mutual regret.

"Mr. Oliver was all this time of the utmost service to Reverend Mother, who without him would have been overpowered. During our stay at Antwerp we assisted the poor Teresian Nuns in packing up and preparing for flight, though they could hardly be persuaded it was necessary.

"The towns throughout the Low Countries seemed to open their gates to the French with joy, and Antwerp showed, as far as it dared, an enthusiastic zeal for them. Finding Bruges was in their possession, where they were received with music and rejoicings, we resolved to go to Rotterdam, and from thence to England. We hired at a great price a miserable vessel and set off on the 26th of June. We had passports from Colonel St Leger in the name of the Duke of York, wherein he recommended us to the protection of Holland and England. We were three days and three nights on our passage, without beds, and crowded in one place, having nothing but our baggage to lie upon, and some were very ill. We reached Rotterdam on the 8th, the feast of SS Peter and Paul. After we had heard Mass, Reverend Mother and Mr. Oliver went to one of the Catholic Curates who procured us a place at a Catholic inn where we paid five louis d'or

* Now at Lanherne (Cornwall).

† Now at Darlington.

a day, and the greatest part of the Community were obliged to lie on the ground. Two merchants of Rotterdam were kind beyond expression. They lodged and boarded some of our religious, and when we had resided four days in the inn, one of them, Mr. Hake, gave up his house in town entirely to us till we were able to hire a neutral vessel, a Hamburgh trader, and sailed on the 6th of July for London."

The crossing took nearly as long as a journey to America in the present day, and must have been a time of intense discomfort. "The Hamburgh trader proved a worse ship than that we came in from Antwerp. We had bought at Rotterdam 15 straw beds, which, with a few flocks sent us from Bruges and laid on the floor, was all the convenience we had, for there was neither table, nor chair, nor the smallest commodity of any sort. It was a corn vessel, only calculated to carry burdens; we had no light but by the roof, where there were two parts made movable to let down sacks. Reverend Mother through gratitude and compassion engaged to admit to our vessel the Teresians that had so kindly harboured us at Antwerp and followed us to Rotterdam, also an English Teresian of Lierre with their confessor and two gentlemen [probably French priests] who boarded at the convent and had come too late to join their own party, Mère St Benoit's brother and sister, and likewise five monks of La Trappe, who edified us beyond expression.* Our number amounted to seventy-three, all crowded together in the body of the vessel, and the weather was very hot. We had furnished ourselves with provisions and water for four days, being assured the voyage would not last longer, but on the third both began to spoil, and we were little advanced on sea through a trick of the sailors, who detained us on false pretences a whole day within sight of Rotterdam, by which we lost the tide and the wind, the latter being quite favourable, but turned entirely against us on the second morning. Thus our voyage was seven days and nights, which we passed without putting off our clothes, and several of the community very ill, and the heat and stench almost intolerable. Mr. Oliver did all he could to help each one, and was indeed the servant of the servants of God, doing all with the greatest cheerfulness.

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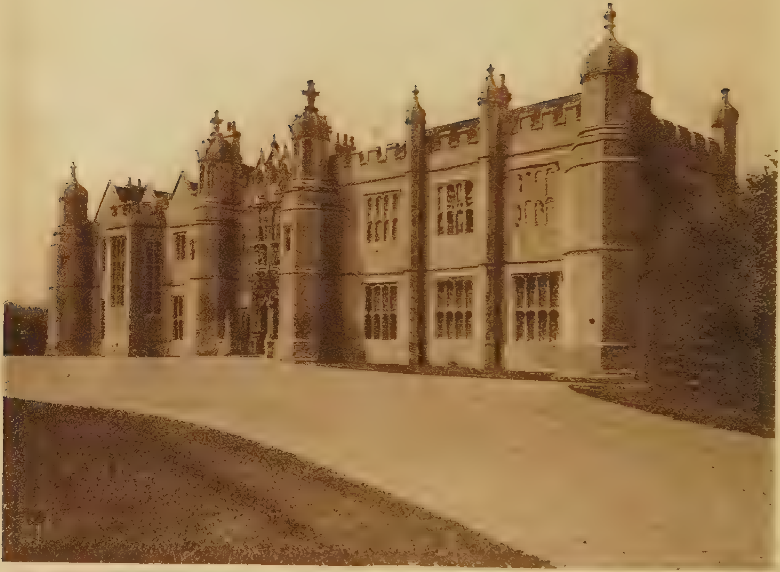
* These monks from the famous abbey of Melleray, in Brittany, settled at Lulworth in Dorsetshire. In 1817 they returned to Melleray, from whence was founded Mount Melleray in Ireland and Mount St Bernard in England.

"Our Captain was most providentially warned by a ship that passed us not to go to Ostend, which was fallen into the hands of the French. This obliged him to coast and raised in us very great fears of being seen and taken by one of their vessels. The joy, therefore, was real when we entered the Thames, but was suddenly damped by the immediate summons of an English guard ship; our Captain not understanding the signal, sailed on, upon which it fired smartly upon us; he then lowered his colours and waited its approach. Several men boarded us with drawn swords, but being acquainted who we were, they said they were very sorry they had frightened the ladies, and left us in peace. We landed at London on the 12th of July."

Thus under the guidance of a descendant of Blessed Thomas More, on the anniversary of whose martyrdom they had set sail, the Community sought refuge in the country from which their foundresses had fled at peril of their lives.



HENGRAVE HALL

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XI

EIGHT YEARS IN ENGLAND

(1794–1802)

THE arrival of the Canonesses in England was marked by a trial which the annals call "the bitterest we had met with in all our troubles." Mother More had expected to find in London all, or at least some, of the nuns who had been left at Bruges. While she was still at Antwerp she had written to advise them strongly to go off to Ostend, sending them £125 for that purpose, "but to our great grief and disappointment we found they had not arrived, nor, in spite of all our enquiries, could we learn anything about them, for the French soon declared it equivalent to death for anyone in the countries they had conquered to correspond with those who lived under the powers they were waging war against."

It was not till the end of August that a letter came from Bruges telling of the death of Sister Mary Baptist Barton and that "it had been impossible to get over, the French already besieging Sluys, all the country round Bruges being full of their troops, and all communication cut between Ostend and England." One of the English suppressed Carthusians, Father Finch, had had the courage and goodness to stay with them to afford them every spiritual help.

Mother More, who writes the account herself, tells of this anxiety for her sisters at Bruges, before giving any details as to their first days in England. She had hoped that the Community would have remained but a few days in London, "where the nuns who had relations in the Metropolis were received most kindly by them, and it was intended to assemble all the others in one lodging. But Mrs. Wright, our Banker's lady, as soon as she heard we were arrived, sought for us immediately and insisted on having Reverend Mother, the four sisters

Jerningham,* Sister Poole,† Sister Pickering, and Sister Farrill, and had sometimes twelve of us at once.

"About ten days after our arrival Lady Jerningham wrote, begging to have Sir William's four cousins at Costessy, which lightened the number at Mr. Wright's, to Reverend Mother's great satisfaction.

"Mrs. Bryan, alias Miss Julia Talbot, was extremely kind, putting up beds for two or three, besides her sister [Sister Alipia Talbot] and Sister Mary Joseph Blundell with Mère Benoit. Mrs. Heald and her sisters, Miss Polly and Miss Kitty Dillon, put themselves to every inconvenience for us; they were Reverend Mother's resource in all perplexities for lodgings. Mrs. Franklin, lady to Governor Franklin,‡ and mother to Miss D'Eveline, was also so obliging as to insist on having two at her house. The two French priests, Messrs. Dourlen and Saingevin, were accommodated with beds near Mrs. Heald's house and eat at her table.

"The relations of each one in the community exerted themselves to clothe in a more decent manner those that belonged to them. Mr. and Mrs. Wright gave to Reverend Mother and to each one of those at their house a new gown, shoes, etc."

This must have been very necessary, judging by what tradition tells us of the manner in which the nuns had dressed themselves for the journey; some of the bonnets hastily manufactured before they set out are still kept at Bruges, they are made of brown paper covered with thin black silk; altogether the good nuns who sought to pass unobserved probably presented a sufficiently remarkable appearance till their relations came to their aid. There could be no question of wearing the religious habit, which was still prohibited outside the "registered chapels,"* and Breviaries and Rosaries were concealed as much as possible.

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* Three of these (Anne, Elizabeth and Edwardina) were daughters to Henry Jerningham, son of Sir Francis Jerningham of Costessy Hall, Norfolk. The fourth, Frances Henrietta, was their niece, and daughter to Henry Jerningham, "of Maryland." The Jerningham family, which has given so many members to the Communities of Bruges and Louvain, traces its descent from Jernegan, one of the Danish chiefs who invaded East Anglia in the eleventh century; he received lands in Norfolk from King Canute, as a reward for his services under King Sweyn. In 1733 Sir George Jerningham married a granddaughter of the martyr, William Howard, Viscount Stafford, and the claim of the Jerninghams to the title was recognized in 1825.

† Sister Mary Aloysia Poole was daughter of Rowland Poole (son of Sir James Poole of Poole) and of Bridget Huddlestone of Milom Castle, Cumberland. "Our Sister," say the annals, "was of a younger branch of the same family as the famous Cardinal Poole." She died in the spring of 1799 of the epidemic of colds which reigned in many counties in England. A few weeks before, the Community had lost Sister Anne Joseph Wheeler, "a model of obedience and sanctity, singularly holy without being singular in anything."

‡ Son of Benjamin Franklin. He took part for the English in the War of Independence and was made Governor of New Jersey.

Mr. and Mrs. Wright showed the greatest kindness to the Community, leaving them free to observe their own hours for rising, meals, and going to bed, and above all, they procured for them the inestimable favour of daily Mass in their house. We can easily imagine what a joy this must have been for the nuns; the fact that it was possible shows the great changes which were taking place in England at this period. It was but fifteen years previously that the reward of £100 to any "Informer" against Catholic priests or schoolmasters had been abolished. The last priest who had been arrested and tried on such information was Bishop Talbot, uncle to Sister Alipia Talbot. He had been released for want of sufficient evidence, but ten years later his acquittal was remembered against the presiding judge, Lord Mansfield, whose house was sacked during the Gordon Riots. These Riots had shown how easily anti-Catholic feeling might be roused to frenzy.† The Catholic Relief Act made it possible to celebrate Mass in England without incurring the penalties enacted by the various statutes passed since the first prohibition under Elizabeth nearly two and a half centuries before.

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* This restriction was contained in the Relief Act of 1791, and it will be remembered that when the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament was discountenanced in 1908 (owing to a like provision in the Emancipation Act of 1829), the members of the various religious Orders walked through the streets of London carrying their habits on their arms by way of protest.

† Among the nuns who arrived in England with Mother More was Sister Louisa Mawhood, whose father had sheltered Bishop Challoner during the dark days of the Riots. He left a Diary which is largely quoted in *The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner* (Rev. H. E. Burton). Mr. Mawhood had received an intimation that his house "would be fired by Lord George Gordon's blue cockade banditti." The venerable bishop, after prolonged prayer in the domestic chapel, declared that the danger was averted, and in fact the house escaped the destruction which overtook those of so many well-known Catholics. The Gordon Riots are thus referred to in the Bruges annals: "On June 13 (1780), the Bishop gave us leave to have the Forty Hours' prayers in our Church for our distressed nation, which has suffered extremely from dreadful Riots."

The stay of the nuns in London was prolonged for several weeks, for it was decided not to go to Puddington Hall, "Mr. Massey allowing only some months for our remaining there. The disappointment was the more sensible as we had relied so much upon the security of this retreat that Reverend Mother had refused several other offers. Mr. Blundell showed himself a true friend throughout the whole transaction. Mr. Wright wished us to have Hengrave Hall, the nursery of our dear Sister Stanislaus Gage,* which belonged to her little nephew, Mr. Gage, son of Sir Thomas Gage, who had given it up to him, but it could not be granted till it was sure the Jesuits from Liège would not accept the offer he had made them of it. Thus we were kept in suspense for nearly four weeks from our first arrival in London.

"Sir Thomas and Lady Gage wrote to us in the kindest manner, offering to lend us £300 without interest and to lodge us in our passage through Bury, with the use of their carriage to Hengrave, if we got that house, which they seemed very anxious we should obtain. In effect, it fell to our share, but with the high rent of £60 a year, exclusive of the window tax, which came to £15. As soon as that point was settled Reverend Mother sent, on the 9th of August, two lay-sisters to prepare the house. On the 12th Reverend Mother set out for Bury with four nuns, and they were received by Sir Thomas and Lady Gage with tears of tenderness and affection, and treated in the most kind manner during the ten days they stayed at their house."

The day after her arrival Mother More was summoned to Costessy Hall; the eldest of the Jerningham sisters, already nearly eighty years of age, and no doubt worn out by all she had undergone, had fallen seriously ill, and begged to see Reverend Mother before she died. She recovered, however, and died among her Sisters in religion two years later.

Reverend Mother was able to visit Hengrave on August 16. The house, which for eight years was to be the home of the Canonesses, had been built between 1521 and 1538, by Sir Thomas Kytson, an ancestor of the Gages. Queen Elizabeth visited it twice on her progress to and from Norwich in 1578. A walk from the Park to Hyde Wood is called "Queen Elizabeth's Walk," and the room in which she slept is still pointed out. It is strange to think of its being occupied by the nuns, whose presence in her kingdom would have been high treason!

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* Penelope Gage, who took the name of Stanislaus in religion, was daughter of Sir William Gage and of Mary Bond, only daughter of Sir Thomas Bond, Comptroller of the household of Queen Henrietta Maria. On October 27, 1772, the annals record her death in the eighty-fifth year of her age. "She seemed never to have lost her first fervour, was remarkably humble and meek, and in the latter years of her life gave herself much to prayer and solitude . . . her virtue made us much regret ye loss of so great an example of religious perfection."

Mother More, in her description of their new home, does not indulge in any historical reminiscences, but considers it from a practical point of view.

"She found it a large and good house well in repair, but no kind of furniture in it except some few cupboards and fire grates, the latter nearly in every room, the garden in very great disorder from total neglect. It resembles a convent by having cloisters below and galleries above, which we immediately called Dormitories. Of the chapel nothing remained but the walls, neither was there a proper room in the house, or one large enough for that purpose. This and the want of water are the greatest inconveniences; the latter we fetched from the fish ponds in a cart. But we have great reason to bless God, for we are far better off than the greatest part of our English communities which are come over. Reverend Mother and those who came with her to Bury worked very hard at making beds, bolsters, and pillows of brown cloth which were filled with wool, and as fast as any were finished, so many nuns joined us. On their arrival they would only often find a bed laid on the ground without either chair or table, but they preferred this poverty to remaining amongst their own relations. On the feast of our Holy Father [August 28] we began to keep choir by Vespers which we read, and we kept it up constantly from that time.

"When a sufficient number of bedsteads were made the infirm joined us. We were obliged to carry the few chairs we could procure from place to place; we got benches for the refectory and joined chimney boards there for a table till we got some made. We were, however, as happy and merry as forty beggars in a barn, and we found the old proverb verified, 'Home is home let it be ever so homely.' The joy of being reunited and alone without seculars lightened all. . . . Our greatest regret was the absence of our dear members at

Bruges. However, we had the comfort from time to time to be assured by some who escaped from those countries, or by Jacobins in England who had a correspondence abroad, that they were well and left unmolested in their convent."

During the first six months of their stay at Hengrave the nuns somewhat modified their manner of life, rising only at five, and reciting Matins and Lauds in the evening. On the three last days of Holy Week in 1795 they carried out the services " the same as at Bruges, and on Easter we rose to Matins at three and a half and reassumed every religious duty and the hours for them as usual." The day was marked by another special joy—that of again putting on the white habit and rochet of the Order. Lady Gage, knowing the nuns' great desire, had asked a friend "-to mention the subject at the table of the Archbishop of Canterbury, where it met with no opposition; she likewise consulted two members of parliament, who judged there was no difficulty in it provided we kept within our own premises. Our good clergyman, Mr. Carter, and the Protestant gentry round us approved of it, and we therefore put it on at Easter to our very great satisfaction."

Mother More does not explain what were the first arrangements for a chapel, but very soon after the arrival at Hengrave we are told that the nuns sang Vespers and Compline on Sundays and feasts, and had Benediction (called " Salue ") at which a small congregation assisted. Besides their Chaplain, Mr. Oliver, they had the help of the French priest, Mr. Dourlen, and thus had two Masses daily, one of which was said at nine for the convenience of such Catholics as could come to it. " Soon after Easter our little Chapel began to be crowded at Vespers and Salue, people coming to see us in our habit and hear us sing; sometimes there were five or seven carriages at the door, besides such number of ordinary people that the two cloisters leading to the chapel were filled, and on that account we were obliged to have a servant in each, to prevent disorder and their getting into the rooms and kitchen. On our Holy Father's feast day at High Mass, which was in *faux-bourdon*, Messrs. Carter and Gould, both clergymen, with their wives came to it; at the Elevation Mr. Gould called out: 'This is solemn indeed.' In general the Protestants seemed much pleased with the Catholic Services, and admired the Church music. It was not only on Sundays that we were crowded with company, but sometimes five different sets on the same day came to see the nuns and the house. This was very troublesome to us, but we were expressly recommended to show that civility to our neighbours at our first settling here, and by degrees we found it had the desired effect by removing prejudices, for the greater part were in time convinced from the constant cheerfulness they always saw on our countenances that we are a happy set of people.

"During the summer Sir Thomas Gage and his son Mr. Gage, had joined the sums necessary to fit up the place that was destined for a new chapel without the least expense to the Community, and we entered it on the 23rd of December, 1795. Sir Thomas had kindly lent us an organ as soon as we arrived, and later on we had, by means of Mr. Gage, a present of a handsome Tabernacle and steps for the altar, white and gold. Unknown to us he got a subscription for it from the following gentry, he himself being in the number: Sir Thomas and Lady Gage, Messrs. Howard, Dalton, Darell, Wright and Pugh. Mr. Gillow the upholsterer made it for nothing, and added the Crucifix."

A grateful record was kept of the kindness constantly shown not only by Catholics, but by Protestants also, and at the end of each year is a list of the donations received. Some of them are sufficiently quaint.

In 1794 we read:

"Mr. Paston made a present of 3 douzen japanned candlesticks for the choir, and he and his lady clothed Sister Mary Bernard Paston; Mrs. Wright engaged her sisters Bedingfield and Norris to send us fresh fish from Norwich every week during Lent, which could not always be procured. She herself sent us from London 12 Hour-glasses. Our good clergyman of Hengrave parish Mr. Carter, sent us two douzen of mountain wine; Mrs. Darell of Scotney 16 pewter dishes and about 30 plates; Mrs. Hum, a presbyterian at Bury, a coffee pot, a quilt and wool for spinning worsted, she was the first among the Protestants that gave us anything. Lord Cornwallis,* Mr. Howard [heir to the Duke of Norfolk], Lady Calthrop, Mrs. Rushbrook, Mr. Acton, near neighbours to us, sent us game, venison, and the

* Successively Commander of the British forces in America during the War of Independence, Governor-General of India, and Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

finest pike and carp we ever saw. Sister Eusebia Pickering's brother and nephew Searle at Cadiz in Portugal, sent us a hogshead of excellent port wine, the half of which was a present to Mr. Oliver. Lady Gage sent us geese for St Michael, etc."

The list of donations in money is a long one; the names of the old Catholic families are, of course, prominent, and especially those of the relations of the nuns. Mr. Blundell of Ince gave £80, Mr. More, brother to Mother More, £120; Lord Shrewsbury and other members of the Talbot family sums amounting to £66; Mr. Taunton £60 and another gift of £40 to buy linen; the Jerninghams over £100; the Jesuits of Bury and the county £2; and it is pleasant to find mentioned among so many Catholic donors, "Dr. Ord, a Protestant clergyman, who gave 5 guineas, and the same from Mr. Cooper, a parson." Sir Thomas Gage gave £200, besides constant kind presents from him and Lady Gage. "The benefactions in every kind," says Mother More, "far exceeded our expectations. These numerous presents and many others not particularized were great helps to us, and we have good reason to be most grateful to Almighty God for raising us up such friends, for otherwise we should have been nearly ruined by the expense of our journey and furnishing Hengrave, which, though done in the most simple manner (all being of deal wood), yet cost us several hundred pounds. Moreover, we found almost every article of provisions near double the price we paid for it in Flanders.

"We were obliged to keep a boy, a cart and an ass, to fetch what we wanted from Bury, being at a distance of four miles. Mr. Pugh (steward to Sir Thomas Gage) carted many loads of our baggage from Bury and all our coals, and intends to continue the latter free of duty on them, a privilege belonging to whoever lives at Hengrave Hall. He also constantly lent us a horse to fetch water from the fish ponds, till in April, 1795, the pipes from the bath-house being finished, it began to come in plentifully, and very fine water it is."

The nuns did all that lay in their power to help themselves. The Constitutions forbid them "to do any work for secular persons, but with leave of the Prioress and out of the mere necessity of the house"; the necessity was clear during the years at Hengrave, and from the first we hear that Mrs. Wright procured for them "muslin turbans to embroider, and good pay for it."

Their friends had advised their thus taking in work instead of "making flowers, etc., which they assured us were not in fashion; however, as the Subprioress had brought some of the needle books, work bags and flowers from Bruges, we showed them to strangers, and they were soon bought off our hands, even some Flemish pin-cushions trimmed with tinsel were purchased by the first company that came to Hengrave. This encouraged us to make more in the shape of apples and pears, which went off equally well, and we could hardly make flowers enough to supply the demand. The French Ursuline, Mère St Benoit, being an excellent and quick needle worker, furnished us with a surprising quantity of articles."

In 1795 the nuns received £48 17s. 7d. by their sale of fancy work, and in 1796 their earnings mounted to £113.

The school was opened about a month after the arrival at Hengrave Hall, with only two pupils, one of whom, "Miss Warner from London," had been among the four "pensioners" who had accompanied the nuns from Bruges; the other three had been sent to their respective homes on the day of their landing. The number soon increased, and the school became a source of income, so that the Community was able to keep out of debt.

On January 18, 1796, is the following entry:

"Mr. Oliver and Reverend Mother went to the Quarter Sessions at Bury, to take the oath requisite to qualify us for keeping a school and having a chapel. Sister Clare Farrill went as her companion. Lady Gage took us in her own carriage to the Hall; Mr. Gage accompanied us also. The Gentlemen at the Sessions showed us great civility, especially a clergyman—viz., Doctor Ord. We were, however, detained an hour and a half before we could get our business finished. As soon as it was over Lady Gage walked home, leaving us her carriage to return to Hengrave, for Reverend Mother had earnestly begged her Ladyship to excuse us from accepting Sir Thos' and her kind invitation to dinner. The having taken this oath entitled us to have our capitals placed out in the name of the Superior also to inherit, with other privileges, and no one could disturb us in our own chapel."*

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* In *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival* (Bernard Ward) is a full account of the long discussions regarding the oath which Catholics were required to take in order to enjoy the privileges accorded by the Relief Act of 1791.

In the September of 1795 the nuns had the joy of welcoming two of their Sisters from Bruges. Mother More writes: "Reverend Mother continued very apprehensive for the safety of our dear members on the continent. Sister Albana Patterson, having some acquaintance with a Mr. Edwards, an American English gentleman residing at Bruges, who was a great Jacobin and modern philosopher, yet of a very humane disposition, she proposed to Reverend Mother to write to him and beg some intelligence of our dear sisters there. Having her consent, she sent off a letter by Hamburgh, the only post open, but he did not receive it till the 12th of April; he answered it at once in the most obliging manner, which reply arrived safely in about three weeks, giving us inexpressible joy, as it confirmed the accounts of their being well and left unmolested. By means of this gentleman we began to get letters from them, which, though seldom, were a great comfort; he also allowed us to send ours under cover to himself. We found that till now they had only received one, dated October 19, 1794. By means of Mr. Edwards, Reverend Mother wrote to the Vicars, for our good Bishop was dead,* to beg leave for them to come over."

But the nuns themselves were anxious to remain in the Convent as long as possible, and "the townspeople were averse to their leaving," so that at length it was settled that only the Subprioress, Sister Catherine Willis,† "who was ancient," and a lay-Sister should come over, Sister Olivia Darrell being placed at the head of the small Community left at Bruges.

"The season was advancing, for September was begun, and we feared it would soon be too late for the journey, which cast a damp upon our spirits, but they were soon revived by a letter from Mr. Oliver, dated from London, on the 13th of September, wherein he told us that the travellers had arrived in good health that morning. The joy this news caused to the Community is beyond description; it flew like wild-fire round the house, and every tongue and every countenance expressed the most lively feeling of satisfaction. Our dear Sisters were welcomed at Hengrave on the 17th. Mr. Edwards had been of great use to them; he procured a good ship for them, and went with them to Ostend to recommend them strongly to the care of the Captain."

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* Mgr. Brenart died in exile on October 26, 1794, at the Castle of the Princes of Salm-Salm (Anholt, Westphalia).

† "Daughter to Mr. Thomas Willis, a merchant, brought very low by the South Sea Contrivance."

Sister Catherine Willis died at Hengrave in 1797. The annals tell us that "she had all her life been a most fervent religious . . . always ingenious in taking upon herself any employment that was disagreeable, laborious or humbling. . . . Her strict observance of fasting was unremitting and for thirty years before her death she had kept the former custom of the Order to take no breakfast even on days when fasting was not prescribed. . . . Nor was she less conspicuous for her obedience, recollection, and zeal for the Divine Office than for her spirit of mortification. . . . Her countenance was always serene, for nothing could disturb the serenity of her soul which she always possessed in peace, considering the Hand of God in all things. . . . Three days before she died, though reduced to extreme weakness, she would not keep her bed for fear of indulging sloth, but on the morrow the physician ordered her the Last Sacraments. She preserved her spirit of penance to the end; though a pin had been run into her flesh she did not speak of it till the Infirmarian, visiting the blister, took it out with some difficulty. She terminated her holy life by a saintly death on November 22, 1797, leaving the community impressed with the highest esteem and veneration for her holiness."

In the May of 1795 Mother More heard through Mr. Edwards that the nuns at Bruges had been turned out of their Convent and were in a house in the town. Though Sister Olivia Darrell soon managed to recover possession of the much-loved old cloister, it was judged advisable to send all over to England except herself and a lay-Sister.

The story of the exodus is a sad one. An old nun who had been nearly fifty years in religion was so overcome with grief at the idea of leaving her Convent that her mind gave way: "For some days previous to her departure she refused all food and afterwards it was difficult to prevail on her to eat and drink enough to support her life, but by degrees she returned to her usual state." On the road from London to Hengrave great compassion was shown them: one nun had to be lifted from one coach to another; an old lay-Sister walked painfully on crutches, and all five were "ancient" and infirm, and after their long life in the cloister quite unfit to travel under circumstances of exceptional difficulty.

Several of the old nuns died during the eight years passed at Hengrave. The account of the burial of the youngest of the Jerningham sisters (Edwardina), already forty-four years professed, throws light on some of the conditions of life in England at the period: "On the 22nd of June Almighty God was pleased to call to Himself our dear Sister Frances Joseph Jerningham. . . . As she was the first to die after our coming to England, we were anxious to see if our good parson, Mr. Carter, would fulfil his promise of not meddling in funerals if we had the misfortune to lose any of our members during our abode at Hengrave.* Being informed of our loss of Sister Frances Jerningham, he very kindly assured Mr. Oliver that he should leave the whole to him, and most generously even refused the usual fees. . . . On the 26th we rose at 3; a quarter before 4 we went to the guest chamber, where she was carried on the day she died. Mr. Oliver performed everything as he used to do at Bruges; when finished we began to sing the *Subvenite* and *In Paradisum*, walking in procession after the corpse, which we accompanied to Hengrave churchyard. The late Sir Thomas had granted our request of burying there, which his son confirmed; the church has never been profaned by any public Protestant services in it, burials excepted. We were returning from the grave at 4 and a half, so that no one from the village or elsewhere saw or knew anything of it; we even kept it a secret from our Protestant servants."

The secrecy reminds us of the midnight burial described in the pages of the *Antiquary*, though the procession of white-robed nuns walking through the early summer dawn presents a picture very different from that of the gloomy pomp displayed at the funeral of the old Countess of Glenallan. Scott wrote his novel nearly twenty years later than 1796, yet even then he refers to the Catholic rites as "familiar in former times . . . but now rarely practised in Protestant countries."

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* As the Catholic Relief Act maintained the illegality of a priest's officiating in the cemetery, it was the custom to have the Catholic prayers read by the Catholic priest in the house where the death took place, and the body was then carried to the churchyard, where the Protestant service was performed by a clergyman of the Established Church. In like manner marriages were first celebrated in the Catholic chapel and afterwards in the Protestant church, to ensure their legality.

Sir Thomas Gage, "our good friend and kind benefactor," had died three months before Sister Frances Joseph Jerningham, and of his funeral we read: "He was buried at Hengrave in the family vault on the 5th of April, at which none of us appeared, not even his four grandchildren, then pensioners with us, because Mr. Carter, the protestant clergyman, officiated. On the same day we had a long Dirge for him, and a solemn Mass and burial in *faux-bourdon* the next morning, at which his son assisted."

The new Sir Thomas proved himself as kind a friend to the Community as his father had been, but he survived him only three years; the nuns sang for him a "solemn dirge, the Commendations and funeral," and on this occasion, when the body was carried to the family vault, "Mr. Oliver walked first in the procession, then came the corpse, Mr. and Mrs. Pugh following, then the Reverend Tom Berington and his Brother Phil: Catholics; Sir Thomas's tenants followed them. His three nieces did not attend, as Mr. Carter officiated."

We find in the annals references to other well-nigh forgotten laws and customs. Thus the nuns who died at Hengrave might not be buried wearing the linen rochet of the Order, but were clothed entirely in white wool, even the wimple being made of that material. This was on account of an Act passed under Charles II in favour of the wool trade, providing that: "No corpse shall be buried in anything other than what is made of sheep's wool only . . . on pain of £5."

On December 28, at the death of another of the Jerningham sisters, we read: "On New Year's day we did not sing any part of the office or Mass, as in England no instrument of music should be heard when a corpse is in the house."

Secrecy had to be observed at Clothings and Professions, as at Funerals. The first to make her vows at Hengrave was Sister Elizabeth Howell, who took the name of Clementina (frequently met with in the last half of the eighteenth century, probably in memory of "Queen" Clementina Sobieska, who had died in 1731 with great reputation for sanctity). The account of Sister Clementina's Profession is given as follows:

"We were obliged for the sake of secrecy to perform the whole very early in the morning; we therefore began Matins exactly at 4 o'clock. At the end of Lauds the organ began to play and ye high Mass began, at the offertory of which all the ceremonies were performed as at Bruges. Mr. Oliver, by permission of the Hon^ble^ Tho^s^ Talbot, Bishop of the middle district, had power to examine for Clothings and Professions and to receive the vows at the latter. As we were much afraid of being discovered, after breakfast the new professed reassumed her Novice's habit and wore it the whole day, which was a Sunday."

Other entries regarding those who joined the Community at Hengrave Hall show how much caution was required, and that the position of converts especially craved "wary walking." Thus we read:

"On the 10th of November, 1799, Catherine Bennet, an Irishwoman, began her scholarship for a lay-sister and took the names of Francis Clare. She kept on her secular dress, for we were informed the government had made inquiries at some of the convents if they had received new members. We continued to call her plain Catherine as before, to conceal it from the servants."

"On the 11th of October, 1800, Miss Eliza Sidney took the habit for a choir nun. She went by the name of Smith, as her father and mother were both converts, and an estate [Cowpen Hall, Northumberland] from an old uncle of Mr. Sidney's, who was ninety-three years of age, might probably have been left from him had he known his nephew was a Catholic and one of his daughters in a convent."

In a little book* written by a granddaughter of Mr. Sidney is to be found a graphic description of the first Mass at which he and his wife were present in 1772. It was celebrated in a garret by Dr. Challoner, the door being locked and guarded, and to gain admittance it was necessary to have a password. Before the Bishop vested for the Holy Sacrifice bolts were drawn and no one else was allowed to enter. All was put away in a chest of drawers after Mass and the room appeared once more an ordinary garret. "It was," says Wilfrid Ward, referring to Mrs. Sidney's account, "a scene worthy of the days of Elizabeth, or of the pages of Sir Walter Scott."†

Sister Lucy Locker, who entered in 1801 (a convert, and daughter of Mr. Locker, Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital), had been in France when the Revolution broke out and had shared the hardships and imprisonment of two English Communities, those of the Poor Clares and the Benedictines of Gravelines, with whom she was sent to the Convent of the Poor Clares at Dunkirk in a wretched boat which could scarcely hold them and the fifty soldiers who guarded them. At Gravelines the seventy-seven prisoners were provided for at a rate of 2d. per day for each, and they would have died of want had they not received charitable help. They lived thus amid great privations and with many alarms for eighteen months. In 1795 they obtained passports for England, where they landed on May 3. Sister Lucy Locker died at Bruges in 1839.

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* *A Hundred Years Ago*, published in 1877 by Burns and Oates. The writer, Mrs. Barnewall, had in her youth taken notes of conversations held with her grandparents, who both lived to about the age of ninety.

† *Life of Cardinal Wiseman*, pp. 189-190 (Longmans and Co.).

Public events are referred to in the annals, as the hopes of the nuns rose or fell with the vicissitudes of the war with France.

In 1795 the annals record:

" The King, as head of the Church of England, ordained a general fast on the 25th of February, upon which our Catholic Bishop added what follows to his orders for Lent: ' Gladly, as ministers of God, should we have announced the return of peace to Christendom, and have proclaimed a day of thanksgiving for so desirable a blessing, but the most dreadful of scourges, war, and its attendant calamities, still continue. The torrent of destruction, after having laid waste many portions of God's inheritance and baffled the deep-laid schemes of human prudence, by the permission of a wise and just providence, rolls on unresisted and approaches nearer still, and nearer to our own shores.* In these alarming circumstances the utmost rigours of fasting, mortification and penance seem called for, and the Holy Scriptures encourage us to go to the throne of mercy and seasonable aid, by recording the deliverance God has frequently granted to the supplications of a humble and penitent people. Our chapels will therefore be opened on February 25, the day appointed for the solemn fast of the nation, and we exhort you to join with your fellow-countrymen in the duties of fasting and prayer, with them to acknowledge your sins in the presence of Almighty God, and, in the earnestness and contrition of your hearts, beseech Him to avert those chastisements which always hang over guilt, and, in His clemency, not only to cover this often-favoured land with the shield of his all-powerful protection, but also to restore joy and comfort to a lamenting world.'

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* On January 20 the French, under Pichegru, had entered Amsterdam, and Holland had become " the Batavian Republic." Pitt, in his speech on the following day, had admitted that " the situation of the country was such as created in his mind a reasonable degree of alarm."

"In consequence of this mandate from Bp. Thos Talbot, Mr. Oliver allowed communion that day to all that pleased, and desired that each one would offer their fasting and prayers to obtain mercy for our poor country. We kept it the same as a holiday of obligation, and had high Mass followed by the long litanies, and in the afternoon Salue."

In May of that same year "Our good friend Mr. Omer Dourlen from St Omer found means to acquaint us by letters that our plate was still safe, but that the person who had care of it for a year would not keep it any longer, upon which he intended to go to Lille to procure another place of security for it. By a second letter dated July the 15th, he gave us to understand that it was still at Lille and safe, but very much tarnished. We had been informed before that it was walled up in a cellar. We have great reasons to admire the Providence and goodness of God that it has been preserved, for Lille, since it was there, sustained a most severe siege, which destroyed numbers of houses and entire streets. Moreover, the French soldiers were so used to search and dig in cellars and underground that it is wonderful it had escaped them. Alty God seems to have protected in a singular manner our kind benefactor, Mr. Omer Dourlen, who was the resource of all the faithful, by receiving deposits from numbers as well as us, and though he was persecuted and put in prison, yet nothing, as we have heard, was found he had care of. When the English presidents, priests and students of St Omer and Doway Colleges were in prison at Dourlens, they would have starved there, if it had not been for the charity and liberality of the same gentleman."

Belgium was incorporated with France on September 30, 1795, and the following year saw the continuation of Napoleon's brilliant successes. On November 25, 1796, Mr. Edwards wrote from Bruges "acquainting us that there appeared no further hope of our return, as the French Government was determined to keep the Low Countries, which their successes in Italy, and over every power they attacked on the Continent, made them the more obstinate on, and in consequence they were establishing the same laws as in France."

On March 8, 1797, another "general fast for the Protestants was ordered by the King, and our Bishop* recommended all Catholics to frequent the Chapels on that day."

At length, on November 29, 1798, comes the mention of "a thanksgiving day ordered by the King," and the nuns sung Mass, "at which several Catholics assisted."

The news from Bruges and the difficulty of sending supplies of money to Sister Olivia Darell, who valiantly remained at her post, was a great source of anxiety to Mother More during all these years, but the story of how the old Monastery was saved must be given separately, for it was only when the Community returned to Bruges that a full account of what had happened there could be written.

Debts had to be incurred, for the recovery by Sister Darell of the Convent, the Church, and its fittings, all which had been seized in 1797 by the French commissaries; and in the May of that year we read, "we had not then a farthing in Mr. Wright's hands."

"In 1799 fresh anxiety was caused by the tax upon income, which the Parliament granted this year to carry on the war with the French. Luckily for us the Revd. Dr. Ord, one of our neighbours, and a great friend to us, was one of the chief commissioners appointed for those who had a just cause of exemption from the income tax of 10 per cent. and the assessed taxes. We represented that we were not liable to the first because our revenues would not furnish £60 a year to each member of our society, and from the second as we were only temporary residents in Great Britain, and the affair dropped."

Mother More notes that the Community at this time consisted of twenty-five Choir nuns and eight lay-Sisters, a large number to provide for under the circumstances.

In the very severe winter of 1779, during the epidemic of which mention has been made, we read: "In our distress we applied to Lady Louisa Brome,* who very kindly sent us one chaldron"; and again in February, 1801: "The price of flour has been enormous for some months; we paid £6 13s. 4d. for four bushels from which only the coarse bran had been taken out, and no hopes of a decrease unless it should please God to grant peace to the country."

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* Bishop Charles Berington, who, on the death of Bishop Thomas Talbot in April, 1795, had succeeded as Vicar Apostolic of the Midlands. His sister (Sister Mary Placida) entered among the Canonesses Regular at Louvain. The annals record his death in the June of 1798: "On the 15th we had a long dirge, and a solemn Mass the next day for our Rev. Bishop Charles Berington, who died suddenly on the 8th of this month."

The charities of both Catholics and Protestants continued, the sale of fancy work brought in a small annual income, and several legacies were received. But the greatest help "enabling us to pay our debts at Bruges and procure a good settlement elsewhere in case we could not return there was a large sum inherited by our Subprioress on the death of her sister, Mrs. Mary Blundell, who had died intestate. Mr. Blundell's behaviour throughout the whole affair was that of a Christian and a gentleman. This unexpected considerable sum (£4,000) was a wonderful instance of God's mercy to us."

It is pleasant to find the nuns sending £50 to another Community which they knew to be in distress. "Thus," say the annals, "we consecrated some part of our good fortune to the relief of the spouses of Christ, and other charities were also given out of the surplus of the £4,000."

In 1800 Mother More gives the following interesting notice with regard to a bill brought in "for preventing the growth of popery":

"In the month of June the convents both of men and women in England were all much alarmed by a bill Sir Henry Mildmay brought into Parliament against their taking new members, proposing also to subject them to very disagreeable conditions, viz.: at every quarter session to give the names of all their members to a Magistrate appointed, who should have power to visit the Convent, when and as often as he pleased, to see if the regulations made were observed. It was suspected that many Catholics of fashion favoured this bill, to whom convents, their habits, and practices were, in general, a subject of ridicule and contempt.* However, Mr. Charles Butler [nephew to Mr. Alban Butler] did all that lay in his power to ward off the blow. Revd. Mother received a letter from him dated June 20, wherein he acquainted her that he was exerting himself to the utmost to prevent the bill from passing, desiring her to answer the following queries, of which he assured her no other use would be made but what was for our advantage and the general good of the communities, which were seriously in danger.

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* Niece to the instigator of the anti-Catholic Riots in 1781. Lady Louisa's grandfather (third Duke of Gordon), the son of an ardent Jacobite and fervent Catholic, was brought up a Protestant by his mother in spite of a promise made to her dying husband. Thus the support of this powerful family was lost to the Church; nevertheless it seems to have retained a tradition of kindness to Catholics. Lady Louisa married the eldest son of Lord Cornwallis.

" Q. 1st. What is the number of nuns in your house, including lay-sisters ?

" 2nd. How many of them have been professed since your arrival in England ?

" 3rd. Were any of those who have been professed since your arrival in England residents with you abroad, as Novices or otherwise ?

" 4th. Are any of those who have been professed since your arrival in England born Protestants or born of Protestant parents ?

" 5th. What is the number of your pensioners ?

" 6th. Are any of them Protestants, or born of Protestant parents ?

" 7th. Are any of them educated gratis ?

" 8th. Are your Community and school regulated according to the provisions of the late Act in favour of Catholics ?

" Revd. Mother answered these questions the next day with great exactness; in the meantime many prayers were offered; the bill passed the House of Commons, but on the 10th of July it was lost in the House of Lords, chiefly owing to the exertions of the Bishop of Rochester.†

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* " The period which followed the death of the venerable Bishop Challoner (1781) may be considered the low-water mark of English Catholicity," says Bernard Ward in his work *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England.* Dull repression had been more effective than active persecution, and Father John Morris, S.J., gives a long list of peers who conformed under the galling pressure of fines and civil disabilities. " All glory," he adds, " to the noble constancy of those who bore the pressure in spite of the example of their neighbours who yielded " (*Catholic England in Modern Times*, p. 18). But among many " Catholics of fashion " who still retained the Faith, there was at this time a tendency to emancipate themselves from the direction of ecclesiastical superiors as too rigid, and a desire to win a character for liberal views.

† Dr. Horsley, who, as Bishop of St David's, had already rendered good service to the Catholics at the time of the Relief Bill in 1791.

This news gave great joy to all the Convents; we had a Mass said in thanksgiving."

In the May of 1801 the nuns welcomed to Hengrave Hall the friend to whom they owed so much—Mr. Edwards—who came over to bring "the deed of mortgage which we had on Mr. Mann of Furnes,* in order to have it changed according to the laws then in force there, by which it would be secured to us under the name of Sister Olivia Darell, who, by remaining at Bruges, was accounted a citizen. Mr. Mann had, fortunately for us, not declared this capital to the French, who would otherwise have seized it, yet by concealing it he ran the risk of a considerable fine if they had found it out. Mr. Edwards brought over also the tradespeople's bills upon us for the greatest part of our debts at Bruges. He left us on the 18th."

At length, in October, 1801, "the preliminaries of peace between England and France were signed. . . . We were much elated, and indeed so was the whole nation." But in the following January the Community at Hengrave was saddened by the news that Sister Olivia Darell had died suddenly on the 12th of that month. Some extracts must be given of the letters sent by Mr. Edwards, which Mother More copied into the annals, "to show God's singular mercy in raising up such a friend, who was attentive to every, the least circumstance, whether spiritual or temporal, and it is the more wonderful as this gentleman was a Protestant, or rather, a modern philosopher, and formerly very censorious on priests and religious people, laughing at every Catholic principle and ceremony of the Church, on which account we had avoided all connection and acquaintance with him before we went to England, which he was sensible of and then seemed a good deal hurt at."

He writes as follows:

"MADAM,

"I have suddenly lost most unexpectedly a kind friend, and you have lost a dutiful and affectionate daughter whose zeal in promoting the interests of the community could not have been exceeded by any one of its members, and yet no one can have a more exalted opinion of every individual of them than I entertain. On Sunday I visited good Mrs. Darell, who was then perfectly well, cheerful as usual, but somewhat uneasy at your silence; I promised her that I would write to you . . . and on Monday morning I began my letter when Brechard (a man servant at the Convent) came in to me. Judge, Madam, what I felt when he said: 'Monsieur, Madame est morte.' I hurried down to the Convent as fast as I could go."

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* M. Jacques Edouard de Man, who died at Bruges in 1825. Two of his great-granddaughters entered the English Convent.

He learnt that Sister Darell had been found speechless on the ground in the early morning, and he at once sent for a surgeon, who bled her, and for a priest; she was given the holy oils and absolution—" in short, she duly received the rites of the Church and it pleased God to take her out of the world about eleven o'clock. . . . She will surely meet the reward of a virtuous and well-spent life. Madam, I have intimately known your daughter for years, and observed her with attention; she was not one of the many who are found here and who have religion only on their lips, no, she practised what many others only profess, and if she had a fault, if such goodness of heart can be so termed, it was only that her helping hand was too often held out to her poor neighbours in distress; but, as she remained in the convent, former charities were remembered, and the indigent claimed relief where they had been long accustomed to receive it."

So the " obituary notice " of Sister Olivia Darell was anticipated by the appreciation given by this " modern philosopher " whose own admirable charity deserves grateful remembrance from the Community he served with so much devotedness.

After explaining how he had taken immediately every measure necessary to secure the property, he adds:

" Count, Madam, upon my doing everything you can expect from a faithful friend, acting for you as for himself, to the best of his judgement. I should sooner have spoken of the duties paid to the remains of your deceased daughter. I supposed the Community would wish that one of its members, who had so zealously devoted herself to their service, should not be interred out of the enclosure. I therefore laid it down as a principle that everything relating to the funeral should be conducted in a manner you would yourself order were you here to superintend the melancholy ceremony. . . . The Curate of St Anne's was sent for, and it was agreed upon that he should perform the service at nine on Friday morning in the little chapel upstairs in ring hall.* . . . As many people of the neighbourhood as the place would hold were present, indeed, a great many were obliged to remain outside the door in the passage at the head of the staircase. After the service the body was carried to the churchyard and deposited in a grave alongside your former good old confessor, Father Gerard. This, Madam, was the first instance of anyone's being buried by a curate since the French took possession of the country, at least I was assured so. As it was pretty well known who were present at the funeral, I did not think we risked anything by the Curate's going to the grave with the corpse, though he was one who had not taken the oath;† the ceremonies being within the enclosure were not exposed to the view of the public. I thought that forty Masses would be enough to be ordered here unless you choose to give further directions on the subject."

Sister Olivia Darell‡ had entered the Convent at the age of seventeen, and was "much beloved by her aunt, Mother Olivia Darell" (elected Prioress on the death of Lady Lucy Herbert in 1744), for, from the early years of her religious life she had shown "good judgement, piety, prudence, and charity," joined to a courage "which made her bear the most violent pains in her head with the most edifying patience and in silence, though they were so acute that the tears would sometimes trickle down her cheeks."

Her weak health rendered her remaining at Bruges in such difficult circumstances the more admirable; her first reason for doing so had been a motive of charity, for she offered to stay to nurse Sister Mary Baptist Barton. From the year 1797, when five nuns went to rejoin the Community at Hengrave, Sister Olivia had as only companions a nun exiled from France who had sought shelter in the Convent, but was quite incapable of affording help and counsel, and an old lay-Sister who was the occasion of much anxiety, for she was of " weak judgement and understanding," and would speak in the most imprudent way to the French Commissaries who frequently visited the house, and in many ways she became a cause of suffering to Sister Olivia, whom she survived but twelve days, her end being hastened by the shock of the sudden death of her Superior.

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* The site of the old church; later the room where Mass was said for Lady Montagu. See p. 325.

† In November, 1790, a decree had been passed requiring all priests to take an oath accepting the Civil Constitution of the clergy (condemned by Pius VI). Those who refused were liable to prosecution if they exercised their priestly office.

‡ She was daughter to George Darell of Calehill (Kent), who had inherited Scotney Castle (Sussex) from his cousin, Arthur Darell. Father Morris, S.J., in his *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, p. 207, gives a thrilling account of a priest hunt at Scotney Castle in the reign of Elizabeth. Father Richard Blount and his serving-man were shut up in one of the hiding holes for ten days with no sustenance but a small loaf and a little bottle of wine; eventually both escaped.

Peace was very near, and Sister Olivia, who had so bravely fulfilled her mission, must have been looking forward with joyful expectation to the end of her long trial, and to seeing her sisters once more, when God called her to her reward. Her death was sudden and lonely, but her memory is held in benediction in the old cloister which she saved from alienation and perhaps from destruction. In the churchyard where she was buried a memorial slab recalls her admirable devotedness. She had taken care to make a will, as she was the reputed proprietor of the Convent, "and as she could not make it in favour of any one of our community, being all accounted as emigrants, by advice of Mr. Edwards she left them to a lawyer in Bruges, bearing the best of characters."

At Hengrave the question now arose as to whether the Community should remain in England or return to Bruges. It may seem strange that these Englishwomen should have hesitated when all other Communities in the like situation appear not to have entertained any idea of again quitting their native land.

The nuns from Louvain soon found a permanent home at Newton Abbot, Devon, and the day was to come when the Canonesses of Bruges should send a filiation to England, " there to labour to render it, what it was once so justly called, a land of saints." But God had still work for them to do in the old Flemish city which had received them so hospitably in the time of persecution, and He would have one of the two offshoots from the Windesheim Congregation remain in the Low Countries, which had given it birth, and where once it had been so flourishing. Mother More writes: " We cannot help remarking that Almighty God seemed to direct our steps in regard to returning to Bruges. . . ." When the matter was put to the votes of the Community " of twenty-five votes, twenty were for Bruges."

The story of the journey, and of the reception the nuns met with in their old home, will be given in the next chapter.

XII

THE RETURN TO BRUGES—AND AFTER

THE Canonesses had the consolation of knowing that their eight years' stay at Hengrave and the partial relaxation of the rules of enclosure, which they had been advised to allow, had helped " to remove many prejudices against the Catholic religion and our holy state, and Protestants seeing the Community at Choir were sometimes moved even to tears."

The *Bury Gazette*, when announcing their coming departure, spoke of " the courtesy shown to their visitors by the sequestered females and their amiable patroness, Mrs. More," and she, not to be outdone in " gentility," and " being very sensible of the civilities received, conveyed her thanks and those of her companions through the same paper to the inhabitants of Bury and its very genteel neighbourhood."

" In the February of 1802 Mr. Oliver had set out from Hengrave to go and see to our affairs in Bruges. . . . He paid all our debts there, and by many labours and strong exertions recovered several articles that had been deposited in different people's hands, and returned to us on the 1st of April.

" In March peace being made between France and England, we were waiting to see how religious matters were settling abroad when an order came out from the French Government that all emigrants must return to that kingdom before the 21st of September, or be excluded for ever with the loss of all their property there. Reverend Mother being assured that we were classed with them, felt obliged to adopt such measures as would secure our buildings and property in that country, for the conservation of which we had been at a very considerable expense for nearly eight years past.

" We judged the most efficacious and beneficial would be to send a small colony over to Bruges, to whom our property might be given up, and sold if there were no hopes of our returning, but if there was a solid prospect of it they were to repair the buildings, and prepare it for the reception of the community. Soon after they got over, the decree concerning emigrants was recalled, but our preparations for returning were then too far advanced to change our intention or defer it till the following spring. This was a singular stroke of Divine Providence, for war broke out again the April and May following, which would have prevented our going over and thrown us into great perplexities."

On July 13 Mr. Oliver set off with three nuns, Sister Clare Farrill,* Sister Sales Jerningham, Sister Clementina Howell, and two lay-Sisters. They landed at Ostend on the 18th, and got to Bruges the same evening. Mr. Edwards wrote to tell Mother More of their safety:

"My son George waited their arrival at Skipstal,† and I was on my way thither when I met them in the street; I stopped the coach, and you may suppose, Madam, I was not a little glad to see them. Mr. Oliver alighted, and he and I accompanied the carriage on foot to the lodgings in the Carmes street, where they met with a hearty welcome [from the family of the old doctor of the Community, M. de Vaux]. The good ladies were not a little anxious to see their old and beloved habitation, so, after they had rested a quarter of an hour, they walked down with Mr. Oliver to the Convent, surrounded by the people of the neighbourhood, who expressed their joy by shouts and acclamations, so that the whole street was in an uproar. Had they only had a couple of hours' notice the neighbourhood would have been illuminated."

Mr. Oliver, in his letter on the same subject, wrote:

"The little colony was most joyfully welcomed by the inhabitants of the Carmes street, if they had known of our coming, the street would have been in a blaze; their cries of joy mortified my poor head and my ears very much indeed, but rejoiced my heart: 'Long live the Nuns! Long live the Confessor!' was a thousand times echoed from one end of the street to the other. They would have carried me on their shoulders if I had allowed them!"

These cries of welcome must have still resounded in his ears when the good chaplain penned the following line in his verses for Mother More's Jubilee:

"Tempore pacato, rediisti in claustra triumphans."

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* Sister Clare Farrill died in 1820. She was especially noted for her great love of Holy Poverty, which urged her to devoted labour for the Community; "even on her deathbed she was so persevering in it as to knit with the cold sweat on her forehead, until her weak hands could no longer hold the work."

† Scheepsdaele, the landing-place for barges.

In fact, when she returned with the rest of the Community, she was assured that the joy of the townsfolk at seeing " the White Ladies " again was so great that " the entry of a prince could not have given them more satisfaction."

Sister Clare Farrill and her four companions settled in the Convent the day after their arrival, " Mr. Oliver having obtained from different friends beds and bedding," and he himself took possession of the Chaplain's quarters; no difficulty of any kind was encountered, but before the definite return of the Community it was necessary to ascertain what would be its status under the new conditions which prevailed. Mr. Oliver went to visit the Vicars, the Bishop of Ghent, Mgr. Fallot de Beaumont,* and the Prefect of Bruges. He was received by them with much kindness, and a great desire for our return was expressed; he explained that the conditions we wished for were to wear our habit, to keep enclosure, have the use of our own church with the doors shut, and to profess novices. They all agreed that we might enjoy these things, but they had not power to secure them to us, and therefore advised Mr. Oliver to go to Paris and address himself to Mr. Portalis (the minister for all ecclesiastical affairs), who alone could grant them.

" Mr. Oliver accordingly set off, and in the first conference with Mr. Portalis he seemed to gain all he desired, and wrote to Hengrave to prepare for our return. We, in consequence, began with great joy to pack up, but alas! it did not last long, for in a second conference with the same minister, the latter appeared much changed, and said he could do nothing till he had mentioned the affair to Buonaparte, the first Consul, which was put off from day to day. However, on the 22nd of September we had a letter from Sister Clare Farrill stating that an application from the Prefect, Mayor and municipality of Bruges, who had written strongly in our favour, was attended with success."

Another " little Colony " was at once sent over, consisting of " the General Mistress of the School, the first and second Mistresses with four pensioners [Reverend Mother being sensible what a great disadvantage the delay was to them], and three lay-sisters. A vessel was hired at Harwich for £30, and the captain charged no less than £13 from Ostend to Bruges."

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* Bruges formed part of the Diocese of Ghent from the Concordat of 1801 till 1827, but owing to the troubled times it was only in 1832 that a Bishop of Bruges was appointed.

On September 23 Mr. Oliver returned to England to accompany the nuns on their return journey. Hengrave Hall was let to "Mr. Howard, heir to the Duke of Norfolk," who arranged that the sale of such furniture as was left should take place only after the nuns' departure.

"We met with many disappointments in our search for a proper ship; at last Mr. Patterson, father to Sister Albana, procured a Margate hoy, called the *Admiral Nelson*.

"Mr. Patterson also assisted Mr. George Hughes to obtain leave from the Lords of the Treasury that our effects (which we had sent on to Ipswich) should not be visited, and that we should be exempt from paying duty on them. He likewise penned and put up a petition from Reverend Mother to government to allow us five guineas a head towards our journey, which was granted; it came to £152 5s. sterling. No members were counted who did not go over with us, the number was thus twenty-two nuns and seven lay-sisters. The kindness of this gentleman (who was a Protestant) appears a singular stroke of Providence in our favour.*

"When we were about to start we were again prevented by a letter to Reverend Mother from the Captain, informing her that the vessel in coming down to Dunham Bridge was stranded and would require one or two tides to get it off without damage.

"Mr. Lloyd, collector of the customs at Ipswich, ordered one of his boats to watch for its release and to acquaint him immediately, though in the night, that he might send an express to Hengrave, which he did.

"Upon this intelligence we resolved to begin our journey, and on the 27th of October fifteen set off in 3 coaches for Ipswich. Mr. and Mrs. Jerningham had kindly insisted that the whole community should dine on their road thither at Haughley, their country seat. On the arrival of these 3 carriages they sent their own to Hengrave for Reverend Mother, her chaplain (a nun†), and their cousin, Sister Mary Agnes Jerningham; these slept there that night, and the next day joined the rest of the community at Ipswich.

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* Later on Mother More writes that "soon after our arrival from England we had the melancholy news that Sister Albana's father died the very day and hour that we took shipping on the *Nelson*." His daughter had taken the name of "Albana" in gratitude to the Rev. Alban Butler, who had been instrumental in her conversion. He was a great friend of the Convent and translated the Constitutions from Latin into English in 1768.

† See p. 180.

" Mr. Atkinson, a good quaker, who had been once or twice at Hengrave, was very desirous of lodging the whole community; he and the good missioner, Mr. Simons, had a friendly contest which should have Reverend Mother, but as the quaker had the prior claim, and as she feared he would be hurt if refused, she went to him, where she and all that could have a bed were most cordially entertained by him and his wife, and also several others for whom he procured lodgings at another quaker's. Mr. Simons very kindly had four of us at his house. There was no place or people that showed us more civilities than at Ipswich: the inhabitants seemed to vie with each other who should show the greatest regard for us. We were not allowed to pay anything for lodging or diet, and the good quakers brought us cheese and other provisions on board the wherry, to which Mr. Atkinson, Mr. Lloyd, etc., accompanied us.

" As the river at Ipswich was too shallow to allow our ship to come up there, we went on the 29th in a wherry to Dunham bridge, where it waited for us.

" The *Admiral Nelson* contained three cabins, viz.: a state room with 10 beds, the middle cabin 12, and another with 8, fitted up in the most genteel manner, having mahogany tables, buffets, etc., with white curtains and counterpanes to the beds in the state room and very handsome coloured linen curtains to the others, and was in short a very elegant vessel. We paid £90 sterling for it. It was supposed large enough to hold us and our baggage, but the latter was too cumbersome [the nuns took over all the cell furniture they had had made at Hengrave—thirty chests of drawers, etc.!] so that we were obliged to hire a small vessel for it at Harwich.

" We set sail on the 30th at noon with the wind North-North-East, and anchored at Harwich about six that evening, and lay there till Sunday noon, the 31st, then set sail again with a good breeze at North-East, which did not last long. After crossing the wash we stopped about 10 o'clock for some hours, all were dreadfully sick except one or two. We again set sail on the 1st of November, and arrived at Ostend about 5 in the evening the same day. Before we reached the port, some custom house officers boarded us, but being too late for business they left a guard and promised to clear us early the next morning, and we hoped to reach Bruges the next day, but the officers only came at 2 in the afternoon.

"They visited the great cabin, appeared very civil, looked slightly into some small boxes, and said there was nothing but what might pass, but they would first look into some packing cases and called for a pianoforte; they are very strict upon instruments of music; on opening it some old music books and paper were found in it. This was more than sufficient; they declared everything must be sent to the custom house for examination, but that the ladies were at liberty to take the barge for Bruges. This, however, we did not choose to do. Our Subprioress had been so ill that we sent her to the house of a friend on shore; three of the community went to be present at the opening, but were informed they must return at 2 in the afternoon."

Mother More proceeds to give a detailed account of the difficulties incurred when the opening of the boxes took place: "For a considerable time the officers only met with books, old clothes, herbs for the Apothecary, and such-like things, but at last they opened a drawer that contained a piece of ten or twelve yards of flannel . . . this was immediately put by for the nation. . . . The cabin of the ship had been visited the day before, yet notwithstanding they searched it again in every part, and even took up the boards. . . . About 6 o'clock the *Nelson* was discharged, and they promised that the sloop *Union*, with the rest of our baggage, should be released the next morning, but it was visited with the same severity, and they seized some pieces of worsted and a roasting jack. The captain of the *Nelson* and his men were ordered to go on shore to take an oath that they would not injure any of the fortifications up the river. The American consul at Ostend, a Scotch gentleman, was provoked beyond measure at their usage of us. At last he hit upon the following expedient: he asked one of the officers in an indifferent manner whether it was true that Buonaparte's niece was coming to us for education. The report that it really was so flew like lightning round Ostend; these gentlemen immediately changed their tone, made excuses for their past behaviour, and restored all they had taken. This diverted us not a little, and after being detained two days in a very unpleasant situation, the *Nelson* set off for Bruges, each one hoping that the difficulties were at an end, but not so, for by the stupidity of a Flemish pilot, the vessel ran aground and stuck fast near harbour.

"Mr. Oliver and the community had insisted on Reverend Mother setting off in a coach the day before with the Subprioress and two nuns; when they passed the court to go to the great door, our old glazier happened to be there; the good man cried with joy to see them, and immediately announced their arrival to Sister Clare Farrill and our two dear colonies, who ran to meet them with a most heartfelt joy.

"On Thursday the 4th of November the rest of the community arrived, two excepted, who stayed to take care of our baggage on the sloop *Union*. The joy was great when we all met and found ourselves again united in our beloved convent and a smile was seen on every face. . . . The young ones who had never been at Bruges found the convent, the Church, and Altar to exceed their expectation, though we had boasted much of all when at Hengrave."

A story is told, however, of one of the young English nuns who had joined at Hengrave and felt her heart a little heavy at the thought of never seeing her native land again. As she went down the cloister her eyes fell on a large picture of the Crucifixion, and she exclaimed: "Ah ! it is home wherever that is !"

"Though there had been little time to repair the house we found it already whitened and the Church remarkably clean, for the windows having been broken, birds had built their nests between the pillars and made a great deal of dirt on the pavement.

"The grand Vicar came to see Reverend Mother, and soon after His Lordship the Bishop honoured us with a visit . . . and also brought the Prefect, Mr. Véry, and his lady, with him. Nothing could be more affable and obliging than they all three were, assuring us of their protection and services. The Bishop even told Reverend Mother that, if necessary, he would go himself to Paris to negociate there. The Prefect told a friend of his that he looked on our return during his government as one of the most pleasing circumstances of it.

"Mr. Oliver gave Reverend Mother the hint that the most prudent way of acting would be to ask for no privileges that could not be granted by the then existing laws against the religious state, but to take those we required. We therefore put on our habit the second day after our arrival and read our office in choir; soon after we gave the novices their own dress and white veil. The Prefect advised us to brick up our Church door, and desired that no one but the inmates of the Convent should ever be admitted to Divine Service; this was no mortification, but rather a satisfaction to us. After a few months we ventured to put up a small bell in the Church steeple to try how the inhabitants of the town would take it. As we found no notice was taken of our little bell we put up a larger, and gradually rang to our regular observances, even to Matins. The Bishop, to our great satisfaction, in his second visit put our enclosure on the same footing as before."

The annals for the year 1802 close with a list of English Catholics who had charitably contributed to the expenses of the journey, and Mother More writes that "except that clothings and professions might not be in public, we enjoyed all the privileges of our happy state, for which under God we are indebted to Mr. Oliver's constant unremitting exertions. He crossed the sea no less than five times for us from February to November this year; he ran among our creditors with immense fatigue, travelled to Ghent and Paris, and never ceased his labours till he saw us happily enclosed in our dear Convent."

Mother More wrote an account of what passed when and after the French had taken possession of Bruges. She may have had notes left by Sister Olivia Darell, but she says she also "collected some circumstances." The account may prove of interest, but must be somewhat abbreviated.

"On the 14th of June, 1794, the troops of the combined armies left the town, the next day a small number of French entered. They were forbidden to sleep in the town for fear of being surprised in the night, so they only stayed some hours, and then returned to their great army, after having obliged the magistrates to take an oath of fidelity to the French Republic. On the 29th of the same month eleven thousand Scotch and English troops came from Ostend with flags flying and a good band of Musick; a report prevailed that a considerable army was to follow; the magistrates complimented them and the chimes played. The day after, the French arrived in great numbers. After a forced march of fourteen leagues they came in by 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at least to the number of forty thousand; they pursued the English but were too late. The French were so little expected that the English Commissioner had that morning set all the men to work in the magazines, and was with them when the French entered the town. He ran to the nearest gate, but was prevented in his flight by their entering at different parts of the town at the same time. In his distress he made an attempt to get over our garden wall, but happily for us did not succeed; he got out of the town in disguise. The French required the Magistrates to republish an edict which declared the town to be under the protection of the French Republic and to retract the proclamation of the 29th, which had declared it to be under the arms of his Britannic Majesty. The town and the country were in a trice full of French troops and a great quantity of cannon; no one might go out or enter the town except the gardeners who had land in the country, and who had the mortification to see it plundered, and thousands of horses put into the corn fields; many farmers were hurt and others ruined.

"For a few days the town was full of soldiers, who said they had leave to plunder it for four hours in the night. Mr. Beyts came to acquaint our people of the danger. He was as pale as a ghost, and told them he would not stay an hour out of his house, for the whole town was in a fright expecting a general plunder. The anguish of mind our poor nuns and sisters felt cannot be expressed. Mr. Bareel kindly came to tell them the report was false, and that they had no cause for fear, but if there should be any danger for them, he would give them timely notice, would come to them and do all in his power for them. He stayed a good while though pressed for time.* Each one felt much gratitude to him and went to bed in peace. As it was thought Subprioress had not heard of the danger, they said nothing to her, but had the pain next morning to hear she had suffered much with fright, had not been in bed, but spent the night in prayer. They did not dare cross the street to tell the Penitents the good news, though they wished it much; those poor nuns sat up all night in one room together, few people in town went to bed that night. Before the end of the week all the emigrants were ordered to leave the town in 24 hours; those that stayed were taken and shot, and in the country they shared the same fate. . . .

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* A granddaughter of this kind "Jacobin" entered among the Canonesses.

"There were often frightful alarms, both from false reports and from frequent new orders given by the Commandant, the Committees, and the Representative. When our people wanted the millers they did not dare open the gates, nor the millers to come for fear of losing their horses. The poor that were served at our door hid their portions when they went out of the gate, . . . our people did not dare use the oven from fear of the smoke and smell; they were, however, so happy as never to lose any of the provisions that were brought to them, which was the more wonderful as the French were very free in helping themselves, for they came in so suddenly that it was not easy to procure sufficient provisions for so powerful an army.

"The markets were very bad and everything was very dear; for several weeks they could get no butter, fish, or eggs, and were much distressed to procure corn. . . .

"On the 26th of July Sister Mary Baptist Barton died most peaceably on St Anne's day, fortified with all the Sacraments of our Holy Mother the Church.* R.I.P.

"In August it was often said that each one in town was to have an allowance of a pound of bread a day and a pound of meat a week, but it did not take place in our convent. Want of rain added to the scarcity, potatoes were for some time three French crowns the sack. On the eve of the Assumption the guards examined every house to see how much butter each one had, with a view of taking away what was more than necessary, in order, as they said, to furnish the poor. On the Assumption the Representative with his wife and daughter and nine or ten Officers, the greatest part Generals, came unexpectedly into the Convent; they went all about and examined the Altar with great attention; it was feared they had the intention of taking it away, because one of the company came the two following days to examine it more narrowly, but not finding it solid marble, it was left.† Whatever they found valuable, whether paintings, statues, etc., were sent to Paris. All the fire arms were ordered to be conveyed to the town house [Hôtel de Ville]; no one might keep a gun under a great fine, either in town or country; thirty waggons of guns that belonged to particulars were sent to Lille. The fine image from Our Lady's church,* valued at forty thousand florins, was sent to Paris; the finest trees were cut down and carried off, as also the coals.

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* Father Finch, the English Carthusian, was able to remain to fulfil the office of chaplain till January 5, 1795.

† There is a crack in the marble which, tradition says, was caused by a blow from the sword of one of the generals, who wished probably to test its solidity.

"In September the Wickee Masters† had orders to oblige all the unmarried men under thirty years of age, poor or rich, under pain of death, to be at an hour appointed upon the market-place to give their vote, as it was pretended, but when they were all assembled the horse guards surrounded them and drove them to Dunkirk like cattle to the market. They were obliged to clean the haven there, and many of them died with cold and hardships; it was a dismal day in Bruges, almost everybody was in tears for their sons, brothers and friends, for it was not known where they were sent to nor for what end. It appeared afterwards that the French were ashamed of it, or that they feared the countries would rise, for the same was done in all the towns and parishes. When the Representative came to town the Magistrates were with him on the market-place he looked vexed and laid all the blame on them, ordering them not to stir, for they were under an arrest for what had been done, by which they understood they were not to leave the market-place. As it rained very hard, after an hour they addressed the Commandant, but he told them it was an affair too great for him to decide upon; they again sent deputies to desire they might go to their own houses, which was granted at last, but they were forbidden to go out of the town. In October every house was examined to see if there were men or arms concealed; this was done by the Wickee Master and an armed band of soldiers. It was, fortunately, a moderate French officer that came to our house with them, who, before they left, asked us for some money. They were not gone when another band came in, who were not so civil, for they looked narrowly about, and even in the outhouses, etc. They insisted upon going into the men's (gardener's) house, but our fierce dog was there, and made such a noise that with great persuasion they were prevailed upon not to go; this was most providential, for our people, instead of carrying the gun to the town house, had buried it there, and for fear of its growing rusty, had that day taken it up and put it behind the door.

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* A marble statue of the Blessed Virgin with the Divine Child, by Michael Angelo. It was afterwards restored to Bruges with other art treasures.

† *Wijkmeester* (*wijk* = town) = official in charge of a section of a township.

"All the horses were taken to a place appointed by the French; these poor people went with heavy hearts who had only one to gain their bread by; many or few, poor or rich, all were obliged to obey. The French picked out those they judged the best, and set the mark of the Republic upon the rest, by which means they could know who had not complied with that order, who were subject to a great fine. The five millions of livres exacted of the town occasioned much trouble. After some months, the whole not being paid, they went in the night with an armed force to the houses of the richest gentlemen, took them out of bed and carried them off to France; neither they nor their friends knew where they were sent to, nor what they would do with them; they were about sixty in number, and many priests among them. One priest was saying Mass when they went to take him; he begged to finish it, but was refused. They went to the Dunes,* where the monks were all at Choir. A novice, who in his fright was running away, they shot at and killed. They took all the priests of that community except three; our people had then great difficulty to get Mass on Sundays.

"The poor country people were great sufferers; their men, horses, and waggons were often obliged to drag the cannon and carry provisions to the army, the burden was so great that the horses often died on the road. In the mean time the farmers had neither men nor horses to till the ground, the soldiers used also to go in troops to their houses and demanded bread and butter, meat, etc. The French often exacted from the parishes corn, etc., and at the end of a short time they fixed, sent ten or twelve dragoons with their horses to be maintained, till they got what was to be carried off. . . . There was no mercy to be expected for any one.

"On April 17, 1795, two magistrates and a Commissary entered the Convent to take an inventory of the furniture;

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* This great Cistercian abbey (honoured once by the presence of St Bernard himself) has an interest for English people. It held lands and tithes in the Isle of Sheppey, and its sixth Abbot (Elias de Coxide) is said to have given help towards releasing Richard Cœur de Lion from captivity. (See *Bruges: An Historical Sketch*, by Wilfrid Robinson.)

they were very civil and neither opened drawers nor cupboards; they came in at about 3 in the afternoon and went out at about 6.

"*December* 15.—The Vicars sent to Sister Olivia Darell the decree to efface all coats of arms.

"*January* 3, 1796.—Sister Olivia had orders to give in the number of her family. Two Commissaries entered the Convent to take the measure of our Choir bell.

"*September* 28.—Commissaries entered at noon, took an inventory in the Church, Sacristy, School, and Convent; they remained till 6 in the evening. The next morning they entered again to finish the inventory and they called for the account of our debts and went out at about three and a half.

"In November the suppression of Convents was begun and several at Bruges at that time were actually evacuated; the Commissaries offered each member, instead of an annuity, a *bon*, with which they were obliged to purchase national property. Mr. Edwards was certain that the joint *bons* of our members would suffice to pay our buildings . . . he argued with the Confessor and brought him to the opinion that it was lawful to accept them, which several divines did not allow.*

"*December* 21.—Two citizens entered to take a view of our buildings and garden.

"1797.—The French having seized the Convents, all our members were obliged to leave on the 13th of February, and went to a private house. This was in consequence of their having refused the *bons*. All our buildings were in the hands of the French and, it was supposed, would have the fate of the rest—that is, would be bought by some contractors for the army, who were come from Paris and brought with them *bons* to the value of five millions of French livres, with which they purchased the greatest part of the evacuated convents.* Ours was the last that shared that fate in Bruges. Sister Olivia Darell very prudently entered a protest against the suppression of the Convent, which was annexed to the *procès verbal* of the municipality, and she got a copy of it duly attested. When they were all departed the Commissaries shut the Convent up. The Ursuline continued with our nuns."

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* Members of suppressed Convents were each to receive instead of a pension *bons* (vouchers), varying in amount according to the value of the property seized by the Republic and the dignity of its owners. These vouchers could only be used for the purchase of nationalized property and goods; many doubted of the lawfulness of accepting them, as it seemed, at least, a tacit co-operation in a sacrilegious theft. The question was submitted to Rome, and the Pope sent the answer that it was lawful to accept the *bons* if the intention in so doing were to restore or keep for the Church property of which she was the sole legitimate owner. (See Daris, *Praelectiones canonicae*, iv, 143-146; Barbier, *Histoire de l'Abbaye de Floreffe*, p. 478; P. Claessens, *La Belgique chrétienne depuis la conquête Française jusqu'à nos jours*, Bruxelles, 1688, p. 18 note.)

The sad state of one old nun, who lost her reason through grief, and the sending of five members to England have been mentioned in the previous chapter.

"The *bons* had been refused by the advice of the Vicars, but as some time after, the French allowed each one to purchase their own property, divines allowed it to be lawful, and Sister Olivia was able to recover our buildings, but as our fine altar, the organ, and stalls in the choir, were made a separate lot by the magistrates, they were not included in the purchase. When our buildings were put up for sale Sister Olivia Darrell and Mr. Edwards expected that some of our friends and tradesmen would have joined and secured them for us, but no one offered that service, except Mr. Lois, the plumber, who espoused our cause warmly and, as the *bons* would not suffice, he laid down ready money for the rest, on condition she would draw on Reverend Mother for £100 sterling. Mother More was able to send it, and the bill was paid on the 12th of June, two days before it was due. The marble in our cloisters only would cost more than the £100 she drew for.

"Sister Olivia, the lay-sister, and the Ursuline returned to the Convent on 29th of May; they did not dare lodge in the monastery for fear of thieves, but took up their quarters in what had been Mr. Gerard's apartments. Sister Olivia had sold or disposed of all the furniture in the house, before the French seized it, except what was sealed up by their commissaries.†

"In July, 1798, at five in the morning, two of the municipality with guards and two constables made the domiciliary visit of our Convent. On August 2 they made a second visit, accompanied only by two constables, and searched more narrowly, being, it is supposed, persuaded that Sister Olivia had concealed some Priests in the house.

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* The suppression of many of the religious houses had taken place in November and December, 1796; on January 7, 1797, the Discalced Carmelites had been suppressed.

† Remains of the seals of the French Commissaries were still to be seen on the Community Room door till about thirty years ago, when they disappeared as a result of zeal in spring cleaning.

"All articles that had not been included in the sale when the buildings were repurchased by Sister Olivia in 1797 were left in the Convent, but were put up for sale by auction in 1800. Mr. Edwards wrote an account of the proceedings:

"'The sale took place last Friday, January 31. The fellow who was empowered to value the effects, though he had been treated with great civility and made frequent professions of kindness, reported that the marble of the cloisters had not been sold with the buildings, so that it was advertised for sale. . . . Sister Olivia presented a petition . . . but it was not till the very evening before the sale that an order was given to put off the sale of the marble till the claim could be investigated.

"'Every precaution was taken to prevent ill-disposed people from bidding up the goods, and the auction took place the next morning in the Church. No one but a few of the poor neighbours were present, and the plumber's wife bid for the whole, one lot after another, which were knocked down to her in behalf of Mrs. Darell at the very trifling value which had been put on them. In short, for about £15 sterling Sister Olivia bought the organ, the iron railing before it, the iron doors at the end of the Church, those immediately above belonging to the choir, the iron balustrade [*i.e.*, Communion rails] before the altar, the stalls and all the different wainscotting, everything belonging to the sacristy, including the vestments. . . . All the pictures were secured too; nothing but a small lot of chairs and an old carpet, valued at seven French livres, went out of Mrs. Darell's hands. . . . I can only say that I do not believe any Convent in the country has been luckier than Sister Olivia. . . .'

"Our fine altar still remains in its place, and though claimed by the nation and intended to be sent to the Museum at the Dunes, we hope from past mercies that Almighty God will not permit it to be profaned, but restore it to us by one means or another."

Sister Olivia Darell seems to have possessed the courage and business capacity of a man, but after reading these few incidents of the eight years she spent in the deserted cloister, not only amid dangers and hardships, but also deprived of spiritual help, we cannot wonder that those who knew her during this period told Mother More that "she often wept bitterly"; she indeed earned the special prayers which the Community were ordered to put up for the repose of her soul.

Mother More herself was worn out by the continued anxieties and fatigue she had undergone during the long course of her government. She was over seventy at the time of her return to Bruges, and, while still in England, she would frequently say that she wished but to see the Community quietly settled in the Cloister of Nazareth and then to quit this world. But the times were still troubled, there was work for her to do, and she had never spared herself in the service of God and her spiritual children. In spite of all difficulties she managed to place the finances of the Convent on a satisfactory footing, and in times of the greatest distress she "firmly relied on the Divine assistance and still continued to help the poor, who found in her a most generous mother, and God evidently rewarded her faith and charity."

Political troubles were not at an end. On July 10, 1803, she notes that "Buonaparte, the first Consul of France, came to Bruges to inspect the armaments on the coast, which he designed for the invasion of our dear country . . . and soon the town was full of soldiers, sometimes to the number of ten thousand, who were quartered on every house of the gentry and tradespeople, yet by favour of Baron Croeser, the Mayor, not one was sent to us."

In 1806, when Mother More was already ill, the Prefect brought an edict from the Emperor, in virtue of which "our Statutes were to be authorized by the Emperor and perpetual vows were prohibited." This last point alarmed the nuns greatly; Mother More wrote to the Bishop representing that if the vows were not for life "no English would join us, and so we must either die out or return to England; his Lordship would not hear of our quitting these countries and wrote himself to Mr. Portalis," whose answer confirmed what had been said by the Prefect, "that though not authorized by government, we might make vows to eternity if we pleased, but that if anyone chose to quit the religious state, the government would not oppose them" — "les abandonnant à leur conscience et les laissant arbitres de leur sort."

This affair was one of the last troubles of Mother More's Priorate; God had been gradually withdrawing her from the activities for which she had displayed so much capacity, and for a long time before her death, says her obituary notice, "she lived but to suffer."

"She gave herself up to prayer, reading and needlework, which she continued till her hands were too weak to hold the needle . . . she was to us no less a bright example in her sufferings than in her active life. Many prayers were offered for her preservation, both by friends and by the Community, who greatly apprehended losing so kind a mother, but she, thinking herself no longer serviceable to her children, redoubled her prayers for a speedy and happy dissolution, and the Lord was pleased to hear her ardent sighs to be united to Himself."

On March 5, 1807, feast of the Saints of the Order, she received the Holy Viaticum, after which "she entered into so profound a recollection that those present thought her to be in an ecstasy . . . she died after a long agony on the 23rd of March, amidst the tears of her children."

The annals dwell especially on her love of Rule, her great spirit of poverty, her mortification, her tender compassion for the afflicted, and declare that "in the account she has left both of the troubles of the French Revolution and the Empire she has omitted nothing but the admirable manner in which she conducted herself on all occasions, which everywhere raised up friends for the Community."

But we will not quote at length; the annals of this period have lost the charm of the direct simplicity of language which marks the earlier records; their style has merged into the conventional formalities of the eighteenth century. Though Mother More's own writing bears the same impress, she seems in her daily intercourse with the Community to have been not devoid of a certain homely and shrewd playfulness, befitting a descendant of Sir Thomas More.*

Her death closes an era in the History of the Community, of which she was the last Prioress elected for life; she was the eighth to hold that office in the English Convent, and was the tenth in succession from the first English Prioress, Mother Margaret Clement,† so intimately connected with the family of the martyred

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* She was the youngest and last surviving of the five children of Thomas More of Barnborough, whose two sons, Thomas and Christopher, entered the Society of Jesus, so that the family became extinct in the male line. Mother More's sister Bridget married Robert Dalton of Thurnham (Lancashire), and their granddaughter, Maria Teresa Metcalfe, married Charles Eyston of East Hendred, where several relics of Blessed Thomas More are kept.

† Elected in 1569 at St Ursula's.

Chancellor, and both their portraits hang with his in the Monastery at Bruges.

When in 1886 a Foundation was made in England,* it seemed that Blessed Thomas More would take it also under his protection, for, without premeditation, the foundresses arrived at their new home (at Haywards Heath, Sussex) on July 5, the eve of the anniversary of his martyrdom, and the first entry of the Priory annals records how on his feast the room destined for a chapel was solemnly blessed, and the next morning "thrilling emotion filled the hearts of all as our Lord took possession of His new Sanctuary and was offered up in the Holy Sacrifice."

The Foundation was made under the Priorate of Mother Mary Gabriel Belton, who came over to settle her daughters in their Convent.

Our Lord seemed to have reserved for her the privilege of offering Him a new Home, as a reward for her intense love of the Holy Eucharist, which was, indeed, the centre of her life. From the very beginning of her religious life she was noted for her great fidelity to Rule and her simple childlike piety. "I bring you a white lily," her brother had said when he presented her at the Convent, and, as the years went by, it seemed as if she had received here on earth the reward of the pure of heart, and that the veil between her and the things of Faith was almost transparent. "Esse cum Jesu dulcis paradisus," says Thomas à Kempis, and it was indeed so to her. Sometimes after singing Vespers "coram Sanctissimo" she would exclaim: "I cannot think what more we could have in Heaven. . . . He is there and we are singing His praises." It seemed as if the Blessed Sacrament strengthened her even physically. It would sometimes happen that she was feeling so faint and exhausted before Holy Communion that she would hold on to the woodwork of the stalls as she went up to the rails, yet she was able to walk back to her stall without difficulty and to remain during her thanksgiving kneeling upright without any support.

During the Holy Week of 1896, though an intensely painful malady was already far advanced, she hid her sufferings as far as possible, in order to carry out all the

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* On August 28, 1924, it was erected as an independent Priory and a Novitiate opened. By a special privilege from Rome interchange of members with Bruges is allowed, notwithstanding the enclosure.

THE CHURCH (PRIORY)

THE MONASTERY, HAYWARDS HEATH

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At the English Convent also, numbers of Communities flying before the German invasion were given a sisterly welcome. When it became evident that Flanders would fall under the enemy yoke, the Bruges Canonesses might have still sought refuge with their sisters at Haywards Heath, but they decided not to leave their cloister.

The Prioress, Mother Joseph Magdalen Smyth, had offered the school premises as a hospital for the wounded, and in the first days of the war it received many whom the nuns were happy to harbour and to nurse. But on October 14 the Germans entered Bruges and installed their own ambulance in the carefully prepared wards.

The records of the years from 1914 to 1918 are among the most interesting chapters of the Convent annals, but so many " War Experiences " have been published that it might seem superfluous to give those of enclosed nuns.

Yet one incident will serve to show that no small courage was required of those whose lot it was to " stand and wait," and it demonstrates also the calm steadfastness with which the Canonesses continued their life " ordained to the solemnities of the Divine Worship " in circumstances sufficient to daunt the bravest.

On May 28, 1918, at 5.15 in the morning, the hum of aeroplanes was heard at a distance; the sound drew rapidly nearer; nevertheless, the nuns went to the Choir as usual at 5.30 to recite Prime. By this time the noise of bombs exploding and of the sharp shooting of the Germans was so terrifying and so near that the Prioress gave a signal to go down to the Chapter House, as perhaps safer. The Community were just entering it when shrapnel came crashing through the windows and fell almost at their feet. The nuns quietly betook themselves to the Community Room, and there began the Office, but even as they did so another crash was heard, in spite of which they continued. It was only when they had finished Terce that they opened the closed shutters and found that the panes of glass had been smashed behind them. By this time the firing had abated, and they returned to the Choir for Meditation and Holy Communion; afterwards they heard that several persons had been killed in town that morning, and the Prioress, going to her room after breakfast, found broken glass lying about, large pieces of shrapnel on the floor mixed up with mortar and putty, while the curtains, torn from their metal rods, were thrown in the middle of the room. Shrapnel was also found in the cells, and had the nuns been in them, some would doubtless have been killed or wounded.

Mother Joseph Magdalen died in the September of 1917, worn out by the constant strain and the anxieties of those terrible years, during which she had given her Community the example of unfailing trust in God's Providence. Her holy life was crowned by a death under the shadow of the Cross. During the eight days preceding it she lay almost the whole time mercifully unconscious of the aerial bombardments which were taking place, and her only coherent utterance seemed to show that her lucid thoughts were, indeed, far from the terrible circumstances which made the long watch by her bedside so doubly sad for her children: "Prayer of the heart . . . that is true prayer," were the last words they heard from her lips. At her funeral, the Church was crowded with people anxious to show their respect for her memory and their sympathy for the nuns.

Mother Joseph Magdalen had been distinguished for her great love of the Order, and for many years she had collected materials for a history of the Community, which she greatly desired to be published.

She was succeeded by Mother Mary Stanislaus Liefmans, the only Belgian who has held the office of Prioress in the English Convent.* Mother Mary Stanislaus had been Prioress at Haywards Heath during nine years, and at Bruges from 1901 till 1911, when she resigned, but consented at the earnest wish of the Bishop and Community to take up once more the burden of superiority at this most difficult period, laying it down again when peace was restored. As soon as the Germans evacuated Bruges on October 19, 1918,† she had the wards they had occupied cleaned as well as might be, and they were quickly filled by a large number of Belgian and allied wounded, to whom she showed a generosity and kindness which won for her the gratitude of the poor soldiers, more valued by her than the decoration she afterwards received. She had the honour of welcoming the Queen of the Belgians, who never fails to go where there is a sorrow she can console or a want to which she can minister.

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* After the French Revolution, as several Communities had settled in England, fewer English girls went overseas for education or to follow their vocation to a religious life, and Belgians were received more easily among the Canonesses. Before this time it had been extremely rare, and till quite recently they were obliged as a condition of admittance to show that they had English ancestors. The annals in 1823 remark that there were then four Belgians and that "it would be unjust to turn an English foundation into a Flemish establishment." But the English descent was sometimes remote and not altogether convincing. One nun claimed descent from the family of Oliver Cromwell's mother, and another showed that one of her ancestors had been governor of a hospice at Calais when the English held sway there! Since 1897 the last restrictions as to nationality have been done away with.

† On that very day the first English officer from whom the nuns received a visit (Major A. A. Gordon, Attaché to the Military Household of the King of the Belgians) arrived on a kind errand from King Albert.

A little later the Convent received a visit from Princess Alice of Albany and Lord Athlone with their two children, the first visit of English Royalty since that of Queen Victoria in 1843. In those early days of the armistice, as in 1815, Bruges received many English visitors, and Admiral Beatty, Sir Roger Keyes, and Captain Evans (of the Scott Expedition and of many an exploit since) came to see the English Nuns, to whose deliverance they had so largely contributed.

In a recent publication* (the style of which does not lend itself to translation into sober English) we read: " Le vieux couvent, sous la garde de Dieu n'a pas été détruit. Bruges, reine déchue, est retombée dans son rêve mystique. . . . Sur les eaux dormantes, les cygnes enflent toujours leurs ailes au reflet argenté . . . et dans le cloître séculaire les Chanoinesses Anglaises passent toujours dans leurs robes blanches."

So we leave once more settled in the old Flemish cloister the Community whose history we have traced from its origin in the Middle Ages, through times of persecution and revolution. It has weathered many a storm in the five hundred years of its existence, and during all that time the voice of praise has never ceased to rise from it day by day in the Divine Office.

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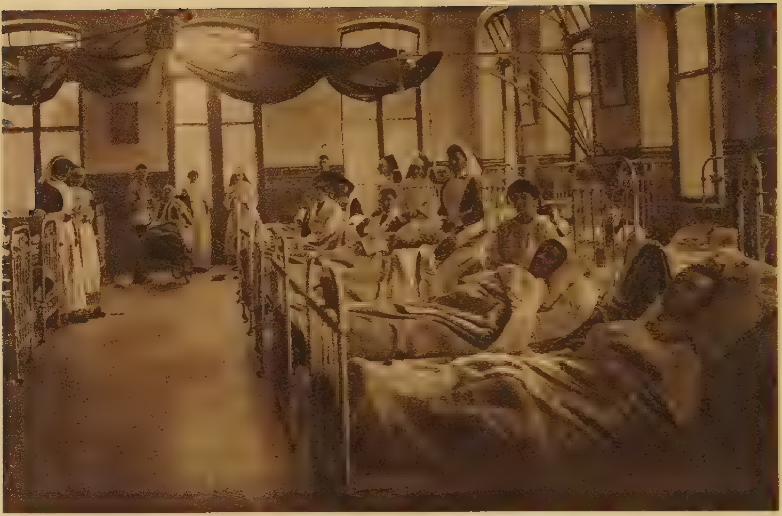
* *Les Chanoinesses Anglaises de Bruges*, par Louis Fournier (Lyon: A. Rey).



SCHOOL HALL, ENGLISH CONVENT, BRUGES
USED AS WARD FOR WOUNDED SOLDIERS. 1914

LEOPOLD I BRINGS QUEEN VICTORIA AND THE PRINCE CONSORT TO VISIT SCHOOL (1848)

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XIII

"YE YOUNG GENTLEWOMEN PENSIONERS"

THE greatest Mystic of the Order of Canons Regular has said that "Christ, Who in His humanity and in His created soul is the most sublime contemplative. . . . He Who is One with the Wisdom He contemplates . . . was ever at the service of men, giving Himself to them in the works of exterior charity, even while He gazed on the face of His Father."[*] So, from the early days of their foundation, the Canonesses of the Congregation of Windesheim have not thought it incompatible with the profession of the Canonical Life to unite to the apostolate of prayer that of the education of the young. Their history would not be complete, therefore, without some sketch of the School, where, like Sir Thomas More in his "domestige school," the nuns have striven during five centuries to make the children "joyne schollarship with virtue."

We must go back to the early days of the fifteenth century to catch a glimpse of the first pupil of the Canonesses, "a little one, of seven or eight years old," learning to read the Psalter from her mistress, questioning her as to the meaning of the Latin, sitting next to her at meals, and tended by her with motherly care when ill.[†]

A little later, during the interdict laid on the Diocese of Utrecht in 1425,[‡] when a certain nun had been favoured by a great spiritual communication and had obtained leave for herself and all her Sisters to receive the Holy Eucharist on the feast of St Agnes, "a young child who was with them" was allowed to share the same privilege.

From the early days of the old monastic Orders of women, we find children admitted into the enclosure to be brought up in its seclusion, far from the violence and tumult of the medieval world.

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[*] See *Œuvres de Ruysbroeck: Le Royaume des Amants de Dieu*, chap. xxxi, p. 168. Traduction par les Bénédictins de St Paul de Wisques.

[†] *Het Klooster van Diepenveen*, published from the MSS. of the first Sisters of the Convent of St Agnes, by W. Opzoomer, 's Gravenhage. Gebr. Belinfante.

[‡] Referred to by Thomas à Kempis in his Chronicle of Mount St Agnes.

Thus many of our Saxon Princesses were educated in nunneries; St Gertrude was taken to the Benedictine Monastery of Helfta when she was but four years old, Blessed Agnes of Bohemia passed some years of her youth in the Cistercian Abbey of Trebnitz, St Bridget of Sweden placed her children in another Cistercian Abbey, that of Risaberg; at the close of the fifteenth century Charitas Pirkheimer was brought up in the Convent of the Poor Clares of Nuremberg, whom later on she was to govern so ably and to defend so energetically against the Lutherans; and in the first years of the sixteenth century St Teresa spent eighteen months in an Augustinian Monastery, where "she was delighted at the sight of nuns so good," and she attributes her first "conversion" to the influence of the Mistress of the school, Maria Briceno, of whom she says that she united prudence to holiness and that she spoke of God in a way that brought her thoughts back "to the desire of eternal things," and diminished her dread of the religious life.

When St Teresa entered among the Carmelites she found children being educated in the Convent of the Incarnation, and though she did not receive them in her reformed convents, a greater latitude is shown in the admittance of her niece, "Teresita" and little Isabella Gratian than would now be tolerated in a Carmelite Monastery. St Teresa even wrote to Father Gratian, begging leave to receive a third child into the Monastery of Alba, saying: "If in each monastery there were one of these little Angels, far from seeing any objection, I assure you I should think it an advantage."*

No difficulty seems ever to have been made as to the reception of children into the convents of Canonesses, though the Canons of the Congregation never took any share in the education of youth, which they left to the Brothers of the Common Life, from whose schools they themselves were largely recruited.

The nuns, no doubt, owed something of their success in the work of education to the help they will have received from the Brothers, who played such an important part in the educational movement immediately preceding the

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* Letter CCXI, *Lettres de Sainte Thérèse*, par le R. P. Grégoire de St Joseph.

Renaissance and in the early years of that revival.* John Busch, in his *De Reformatione Monasteriorum*, tells us of a Canoness of the Monastery of Bronope, Sister Thecla, that she was "grammatica competenter docta," and that she so instructed the pupils of the Convent of Marienberg, which he had sent her to reform, that after three years of her teaching they were able to write letters in Latin, for the correctness of which he vouches, having himself examined them. "Litteras sive missas in bona latina magistraliter dictarent," he says, in language which, it must be owned, would not have won the approbation of his brother canon, Erasmus. When Sister Thecla's pupils went to their lessons after her departure their regret for her made them weep, and the Prioress, herself in grief, had to console them. These details are given in a Latin letter which was sent to Sister Thecla, who answered it in the same language.

The nuns of the first houses of the Congregation of Windesheim seem to have been afforded every opportunity of learning Latin during the time of their noviceship; they were exhorted to make use of it in their intercourse with one another, and several letters have come down to us which show that it was also used in the correspondence exchanged between the convents of the Order.†

These were the traditions that were brought to Louvain when the Convent of St Ursula was founded there in 1415, nearly thirty years before the foundation of Eton. Possibly Elizabeth Woodford, when she entered among the Canonesses in 1548, may have added to these traditions something of her own experience of pre-Reformation education in England, as she had seen it carried out both in her former Monastery of Burnham and in the household of Dr. Clement and his wife, who must have closely followed the methods employed in Sir Thomas More's family.

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* An account of the educational work and influence of the Brothers of the Common Life is given in *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance*, by W. H. Woodward, Cambridge University Press.

† In the Convents founded by St Gilbert of Sempringham the nuns carried their love of learning so far that it was judged expedient to forbid them to speak Latin to one another without due cause! (See Mother Drane's *Christian Schools and Scholars*, Burns Oates and Washbourne, London.) In the fourteenth century Bishop Stapeldon admonished the Canonesses Regular of Canonsleigh, as also the Benedictine nuns of his diocese (Exeter), that if it should be necessary to speak in times of silence, the nuns should whisper in Latin just a word such as "candela, liber, missale, panis, cerevisia, and so forth." (See *History of Buckfast Abbey*, by Dom Adam Hamilton, p. 126. Sold at Buckfast Abbey, Devon.)

When little Margaret Clement came to school at St Ursula's, the first of a long line of English girls, stretching down to our own days, "the fame of that monastery was already great for the bringing up of children." Indeed, the standard of Margaret's parents would have been a very high one. Dr. Clement had been Professor of Greek at Oxford and tutor to Sir Thomas More's children before he gave himself up to the study of medicine. With Margaret Roper he had taught her adopted sister, Margaret Giggs, who was to become his wife, and was able to give him considerable assistance in his translations from the Greek; in her epitaph, which he himself composed, he tells us that she taught Latin and Greek both to her sons and daughters.

Sister Elizabeth Shirley, in her life of her holy Prioress, also refers to her having learnt "greek and Latten" from her mother, and says that Sir Thomas More made great account of her father "for his Learninge and skill in ye foresayde tow langueges, *a rare thinge in those dayes*."

This must have been written after 1612, since Mother Clement's death took place in that year, at the English foundation of St Monica's.

Her sister, Helen Clement, had also been brought up at St Ursula's, and had married Thomas Prideaux, "an Esquire of Devonshire." Their only daughter Magdalen* was likewise sent "to learn virtue in the Cloister under her aunt's government," and we are told of her that "she had education to many rare qualities, for she was a fine musician both in song and instruments, had the Latin tongue perfect, also poetry, and was skilful in the art of painting."

This accomplished girl married William Copley of Gatton, Surrey, son and heir of the Lord Thomas Copley, Baron of Welles.† Their two children were sent, as their mother had been, to St. Ursula's, and it may be remembered that their vocation and Profession at

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* William Copley was first cousin to the Ven. Robert Southwell, S. J., his father's sister, Bridget Copley, having married Richard Southwell of Horsham, Sussex.

† When the manor house of Gatton was confiscated on account of its owner's fidelity to his Faith, there was found "so fair a library of books that he had pleasured therewith the universities of England."

St Monica's among the Canonesses was "ye olde Mother's" last great joy on earth.

It may not be out of place to give here the story of their coming overseas, as told in the Chronicle, for it speaks well both for the instruction and the moral training they had received.

"Coming over, our Lord would have them make public confession of their Faith; for lying at the inn in Southwark, expecting to depart with a widow that went under the Spanish Ambassador's charge, in the meantime there was much ado in London, in searching of houses upon news that the King of France was killed.*

"Wherefore the innkeeper's wife, having one night disputed with the eldest of these sisters, and finding she was too hard for her in matters of religion, confounding her even by the Bible, upon which she still harped; whether she had given notice to the officers of them, no one knoweth, but one night when they were abed, there comes a justice of peace with many men, and in they would come. They refusing to open the door, being about midnight, they threatened to break it open. Wherefore the two sisters not knowing what might happen, took such Catholic books as they had into the bed with them, as also the money for their voyage (and it was wisely done), leaving only one vain book of Virgil's, that was taken away and they saw it no more. So laying themselves still they desired their old nurse, who had come out of Spain for their sakes, and was now to come over with them, to open the door. Then came into the room many men, and drew open the curtains. They lay still; the justice of peace sat him down by the bedside, and asked of what religion they were, and whether they went to Church. The eldest answered that they were well known in Southwark to be recusants, for their father hath one manor and many houses there. Then he asked if she would go to the church? She answered No. He asked again, Why? She answered, because she would not be a dissembler, to be in her mind of one religion and make show of another. . . . He asked of her younger sister if she was also of the same mind, who answered yea. Then they willed them to stay in that inn till they heard further from him, and their man, who lay in another chamber, he took and sent to prison; but in respect of their father being well known he did not send them to prison, and so departed."

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* Henry IV, assassinated by Ravaillac on May 10, 1610.

The two girls managed to communicate with their mother, who came, and speaking with the justice got them freed, perhaps by payment of a fine. "Their man being a stranger born, of the Dutch nation, was released by the intervention of the Dutch Ambassador."

Mother Mary Wiseman, under whom they were professed, belonged to a family in which "the daughters as well as the sons were brought up to learning of the Latin tongue," and Mr. Wiseman "every Friday would make an exhortation to his children in Latin thereby to exercise them in that language, as also to give them good instruction."

While the school was under the direction of women coming from such homes, a high ideal of education must have prevailed, though it undoubtedly suffered an eclipse, at least, with regard to secular learning, when, in England, as throughout Europe, the set-back given to education by the Reformation bore its fruits. Women, instead of cultivating "humane letters and liberal studies," as Sir Thomas More would have them do, became such as the Vicar of Wakefield describes his wife, whose breeding few country ladies excelled, for "she was able to read any English book without much spelling, and was excellent at pickling, preserving and cookery."

When the Cloister of Nazareth was founded in 1629, among the nuns who were sent thither was Sister Mary Altham, who had been mistress of the children at St Monica's; she took with her one of her former pupils, Ursula Palmes (granddaughter of the Lady Babthorpe), who was to be the first "scholar for the Order" at Bruges, as her cousin, Ursula Babthorpe, was to be the first little "convictress," of whom mention is made.

The annals do not give us much information about the educational work carried on by the Canonesses of the Community, but manuscripts are preserved at the English Convent which are of interest, as throwing light on the ideas and methods of English nuns at a time when no Convents existed in England.

The earliest of these documents embodied an attempt to adapt the Rule of St Augustine for the use of the children, and is entitled:

A Rule
For ye Pensioners of ye houses of our Lady
of nazareth
of ye holy order of St. Augustine
according to ye Spirritt & in imitation of ye R.
of yt most Religious order
for ye Directions of, & to be
observed by
The yong Lady's gentlewoemen
Pensioners
Att ye Monastery of ye English
Chanonesses Regulars of ye H: order
of St Augustine
Att Brugis.

The designe where of
is not only for ye Present use
Butt allso
for imprinting such Christian maxims
as may be of great Benefitt afterwards when ye goe
out of ye schoole and Present retirement.

It follows the order of the chapters into which the Rule of St Augustine has been divided. Thus, the first is "Of living in unity," and there are others on "Humility and meekness," "On Prayer," etc.

The purpose of this compilation is chiefly spiritual, and the writer does not hesitate to tell the "yong gentlewoemen" that they should "prefer one quarter of mentall prayer before an hour of vocall ones," and "should desire ardently to advance in it & by as many meanes as they can, improve their knowledge of it by Self Denyall, mortification, fasting," and they are exhorted "to gett Leave to fast when yu can."

They are also warned to "have a care of tow clamorous noises it disturbes the Repose of Jesus in yr hart." It must be supposed that at this time the Convictresses were in reality looked on as "scholars for the Order." The chapter on "the religious Habit" is transformed into "Of wearing your Cloathes." The pensioners must be "so cloathed as to avoid all being taken notice of for unhansomeness or fineness; ye fine feather makes ye proued beird, not ye god. Gaudiness is butt ye certaine marke of a chilldish mind."

"Giveing anick name" is forbidden and "if any shall have done so and have not asked Pardon privatly yt day, she shall be made to doe it Publickly ye next." But "if yu believe any one unkinde to yu, force her to become kinde by being Particularly so to her and yu have gained yt hart to god and to you."

The children are warned not to "be rude in their mirth on pretence of freedom, 'tis equaly unbecoming one yt that may prove a chast spouse of christ or a virtues maide yt intends to marry . . . a yong snake is a Littile snake butt a great Poison or at least fearfull danger."

The other MSS. contain a set of Rules for the school, said to "have been accepted of in the year of our Lord 1697," and "Directions for ye Mistresses of the Pensioners." They may possibly be the work of Mother Lucy Herbert, though she was then but a few years professed, but, as we have seen, she was from the first remarkable for maturity of virtue and judgement. The words, "I knew a Pious Dutchess who all time her weomen drest her Ever read aloude a pious book to benefit herself and all those that attended her toilet," probably refer to her mother the Duchess of Powis.

There is no longer question of such ascetic counsels as we find in the earlier document, but the children evidently received a training well suited to prepare them to play their part as "Christian gentlewomen."

They were reminded "how many yong Ladyes and children ther bee in England, endued with equal or richer talents, of the same age, ranc, condition with you . . . who are left in a wicked world," but "tender chosen plants are not to remain allwayes nor even long, in ye nurseries . . . nor doth devotion consist in a sett forme of daily prayers, or any dayly exercises of piety . . . it is to bee found in the interior disposition of the soule and is in regard to God what the affection of a dutifull child works in her towards a tender mother."

The children were to rise "at five and a half from Easter to all Saints and at ye quarter before six from all Saints to Easter. Ye mistress should call them with these words: 'My God, I give you my heart.' Ye mistress must observe to see yt each one is strait laced and she must lace and comb them herself till they are big enuff to comb themselves. They must larne their morning and night prayers and ye children must kneel in order one before ye other, quire ways repeating softly ye oblation and prayers. Then they go two and two, to ye quire for Mass." They are admonished, unless in case of "weakness or sickness never to sit or leane, but to kneele up. When their Misteress gives them ye sign for leaving ye quire, they shall all get up, and together make a low curtesy to ye most bd. Sacrement."

Breakfast is at "seaven and a half. At eight a Clock learne to wright, and those who know it well, may also learne to cast accounts. Observe cheefly to spell well ye contrary defect being very general."

Whilst they were writing, the Mistress visited "all their things, to see if all be laid up neatly, for this she must breed them up to; wt ever she finds out of order she shall pinn at ye backs of those they belong to, or mark them down for an orkin.*

"At eight and three quarters. Meet all and say ye Salve Regina and ye prayers to offer up your work. Then sett to it and learne French." In cold weather the Mistress "gives them leave first to worme them. As soon as they begin to work they begin allso to read their lessons to each Mistress, one of them hearing French, and ye other Latin and English. Ye Latin they learn to read first had best be our bd Lady's office." This they were exhorted to recite daily.

"At tenne a Clock, they say their beads walking with their Mistresses. At tenne and a quarter Examen, for ye space of three Misereres or less. Then at ye half hour till Dinner they must learne all those duties of civility and breeding which are to regulate their carriage on different occasions, without which they will be esteemed but very ill bread, as making abow if kneeling or sitting, a curtsye if standing, when any one sneezes; pulling off their glove when they give or take anything, not interrupting another when they speak nor speaking when a nothere dos, never tying their shoo before any one they owe respect to, and when with familiars to turn them aside when they do so, never to shut ye dore when a nothere passes by, and ye like of othere little practises of civility. Their Mistress must obsarve yt they carry themselves with due respect & civility even to one anothere such as befits their birth. . . ." There is to be "no hasty greedeness in eating, no hurry in your pace, no clownysh lolling or leaning on your elbows, chiefly att table, no inconstant giddy motion, no faces that discompose the natural features of your own, no childish fondness, no dull heavy and discontented or peevish look yt may in any point disfigur that beauty of the soule, which ever apears in a well composed meene."

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* Orkin is the West Flemish spelling for *Ort*, a small coin, the fourth part of a penny (Fr. *Liard*), and *kin*, a diminutive. (*Cf. orts* = remnants, leavings.) The money collected from the small fines imposed on the children for disorder was given to the poor.

"When dinner is come (at tenne and three quarters) ye Mistress goes first into ye refectory, and they in order come in one by one, making her a handsome curtsy and then sit down in their places; only she who reads ye martyrologe, whilst grace is saying kneels down by her Mistress, at ye end whereof she reads ye martyrologe and then sits down."

In the earlier MS. it is said: "Lett some pious book bee read for some time that ye soule may have her foode as well as the body," but in that of 1697, "They must not be permitted to speak but with low voices at table." Both MSS. insist that "all eagerness upon meate must be avoided and little humorsom disgusts overcome by learning to eate of all things," and they must not "reflect on what they eate by shewing either too great a likeing or dislikeing for it, for those are reflections not beseeming persons of good birth. They must not be permitted to make or leave any mamocks and must larne to eate all things and ye mistress must be carefull yt they carry themselves hansomely in time of meales, so as becomes parsons of their birth. At ye end of ye meal their must be read a little clause out of ye Imitation of Christ, and then ye Mistress says Grace, and at ye end thereof all rise and together make a curtsy to their mistress, and then civilly go from table.

"From dinner till one a clock they may play & devert themselves. When it rings silence in ye afternoon ye children go to their works" (needlework). This was also the time at which painting and music were taught; the harpsichord seems to have been much in favour. Before Vespers, time was to be given "to lay by their work and put on their ruffles, and this must be obsarved yt they allwayes pull them off, pine up their peticots, and put on their aprons, when they return from quire at any time."

From Vespers (at three) till Supper (at five) "they are to imploy themselves in larning French, and such things as they should know by heart, as their morning and night prayers and seven little catechises, which each one must know, both questions and answers.

"Two days in each week must be imployd after Vespers in larning Arithmatick.

"At supper observe the same as at dinner and when supper is out, they go to recreat and divert themselves.

"At seven evening prayers. If any one that day shall have had any quarrell with an other, she shall aske her pardon and they shall embrace one an other.

"After night prayers, during their undressing, wch must be in silence, ye mistress must appoint two to say one of the catechises, yt is, one to ask & ye other to answer."

The mistress then went round to give the children a blessing in the name of their parents, making a little cross on the forehead of each, as was the custom in Catholic families. Finally the children are told: "'Tis good to sleepe with your beads about your wrist and if you awake att night to adore God with some short aspiration."

The mistress must every evening examine their shoes and stockings to see if they want mending. Careful mending is much insisted on, "for it will be an acceptable qualification either in ye world or religion for them to know how to do it," and during the time given to needlework, "Ye cheefest things they must be imploy'd in and learn to do well is plain work, tapestry, florishing, stitching, marking and neatly mending their clothes, befor they are permitted to learn anything ellse, unless it ware upon play days, for if they do ye afforsaid things well they will be fitt to learn anything, and being restrained from such little works as they a fancy to learne they will apply themselves to them in their recreation times and so will not be in danger of losing yt time."

The advice given to the mistresses for the formation of the children's character is excellent. They are to teach them, to have "a generous courage and a free liberal heart towards God," to obey "not only for feare, att Eye, and in the presence of the mistress, but by motive of conscience, and remembering that the mistresses beare the place of both Father and mother, nay, even that of God, there must bee nothing base in their conduct towards them. . . ." And the children are told that "being well borne and Educated, you will finde less difficulty in the practise of the virtu of Obedience, hard only to such, the baseness of whose birth and slavish ruffness of whose Education hath accustomed never to regard duty, butt only to act by feare and compulsion. Whilst nature is soft and flexible it ought to be bent and to receive ye first fould of ye affections and habits. Children should be made to practise goodness before they know wt it is, & to be accustomed to it by obedience and necessity, before they can chuse it by judgement. Childhood has its perfections and virtues, as well as ripper years and as soon as nature teaches them to speak and will, they ought to be learnt to speak and will as they ought."

Great prudence is to be observed by the Mistresses in the correction of faults: "there is in children a sartaine sensibility wch if rightly managed will help very much to leade to good; so when ye mistress is obliged in private to reprehend & severely to correct them, lett her never faile to intermingle some expressions of tenderness, wch may make them feel she loves them, & yt ye correction proceeds from her concern for their well doing. As to proceeding with them in publick, she must obsarve never to speak of them with disdain, tho' she may & ought to show her displeasure, & when ye fault is publick her reprehensions must be so too, butt she must never make use of hard or unfitt terms to express her displeasure, much less may she add unhansome names.

"Ye mistress ought never to seem touched or sensible of ye marks of kindness they shew her, if they are not accompanied with respect, such as children well born and bred shew to their parents. Lett them find in her a great sweetness and patience, never any familiarity. . . . She must see to gain ye confidence of ye children, but it must be by way of esteem, not of tenderness. 'Tis her whole business to bee a tender butt not too indulgent Mother.

"Tho ye mistress ought to love them, yett her comportment must be such as they rather guess she loves them than be assur'd by her of the same. When they have done a miss lett her displaised countinence and troble be there cheef punishment & when they have done well a smiling contented one be their reward." Good taste was impressed on the children and they are warned against mere show and gaudiness. "Gould and silver may make a rich ragg, butt 'tis the order that art lays in it, which makes ye worth of ye Embroidery. . . . Modesty equaly forbids gaudiness, vanity, affectation and luxury in cloathes; all ye birds that have gaudy largly spread feathers, have a disproportioned smal head; and such as pride themselves in vaine cloathes may bee judged to have butt little braine."

There is a very marked freedom from Jansenism in the advice given to the children regarding Communion. Mother Lucy Herbert's "tender devotion" to the

Blessed Sacrament seems to breathe throughout what is said concerning it, and Pius X would have approved of such passages as the following: "Innocent soules, so they know what they receive, are the most agreeable dwelling houses to our Bd. Lord; hence for ye first 800 years, what remained of ye Bd. Sacrament was given to Innocent children just after baptisme; ye little pensioner Imelda weeping that she was refused communion in ye Middle of the Quire, whilst the Religious receaved, being 8 years ould, the Blessed Sacrament flew out of the priests' hands in to her mouth."

"Improve highly in yourselves the desire of frequently confessing and receiving ye blessed Sacrament, though you actually practise either, only as your confessor shall think fitt. For particular preparation for confession or communion, fitt Exercises and prayers after both and the time to bee spent on them, each one must follow the particular advises of her confessor or director."

But the earnest desire to establish and cultivate in the school a deep and constant devotion to the Blessed Eucharist is expressed at too great length to find place here.

There is *A Daily Exercise and Devotions for the Gentlewomen Pensioners*, undoubtedly written by Mother Herbert and printed at "Douay, by M. Mairesse, 1712."

It contains prayers for Mass and Holy Communion, Meditations for a Monthly Review, advertisements for Young People just entering into the world, and short prayers to be said on all kinds of occasions. Thus there are "Aspirations" to be employed: "In putting on your peticoat . . . your mantow, etc." When these young gentlewomen see "a coach full of people" they are expected to say: "These in coaches, and these on horses, etc., 'Tis their glory to be drawn by beasts, but all our glory, O my soul, ought to be only in going to God." At sight of a rock they exclaim: "I am harder than this rock," etc. When they are cold: "O, if I felt the extream coldness of my indevotions!" When they see the moon: "The fool changes like the moon," etc. The sight of a river is to make them break out into the following: "Ha! my life glides away like these waters, my days roll like these waves!" "A fine house" is to inspire them with the reflection: "O! in Heaven there will be much finer palaces!" and so on, that "like spiritual bees they may draw the honey of devotion from all objects."

Such "devotion" has a decidedly professional ring, but it was not an age of "naturalness." That the wave of artificiality had affected the expression of piety is shown by the manner of writing the lives of Saints, from which their biographers are only gradually freeing themselves in these our days of ultra-liberty.

The Canonesses certainly took to heart to educate the children confided to their care to the utmost of their ability. The mistresses are warned that "it is not charity only but allso strict justice that must make them apply their whole endeavours to ye right education of ye children," and that "they must by all possible means promote their learning all ye accomplishments yt may be serviceable to them, & render them more usefull in wt ever state they take to . . . they are to accommodate their discourse according to the children's age & capacity, after a familiar easy way, so as they may better understand it," and Mother Herbert concludes the "Rules" which are attributed to her, by declaring that she has "here set down wt she has seen practised by them yt understood perfectly ye educating of youth."

The results of the system employed in the Bruges school may be largely judged of by the lives of the nuns themselves, for from it the Community was almost entirely recruited.

In 1692 there entered "the two Mrs. Vaughan* for convictresses." They were daughters of Richard Vaughan, of Welsh Bicknor† and of his second wife, Agatha Berington. The eldest, Anne (Sister Mary

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* A curious survival of the custom, once general in England and France, of giving young girls and even little children of gentle birth the title of "Mrs." or "Madame," is found in the fact that the pupils at Bruges still use the word "Mesdames" instead of "Mesdemoiselles" when addressing a number of their companions.

† His only son, by his first wife, Bridget Wigmore, had but one daughter, who entered the Bruges Convent. In order to ensure the continuance of the family, Richard Vaughan remarried when he was already an old man, and by his second wife, Agatha Berington, had four children. The writer of the annals seems to be mistaken in asserting that Richard lived to be over a hundred, for he was born in 1600 or 1601, and his will was proved in March, 1697. The old house of Courtfield, the home of several Canonesses of Bruges and Louvain, is the place where Henry V, the victor of Agincourt, was nursed by the Countess of Salisbury in 1388, and his cradle was long shown there. (See *Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, by Snead-Cox, and Foley's *Records*, Series XII, p. 892.)

Joseph), died after five years of Profession; "she offered herself," say the annals, "as an oblation of Charity" for another soul, and a month after, the illness began which terminated in her early death.

"The second, Teresa, had been sent here as a convictress at ten years of age, and at twelve, by her father's orders, recalled home, for he, being then past a hundred, thought he could not live much longer, though his health and strength remained good, so desired to have his children with him before he died. Our dear sister left us in that tender age with so great a desire to be a religious that, being come within sight of her father's house, those that conducted her said in jest: 'Now, Miss Vaughan, you see Courtfield; will you go to it, or return to Bruges?' She, without the least demur, turned her horse, and would have gone back even without seeing her friends, though extremely fond of them. In less than a year her mother died, and in a year more her father. After she had lived some little time at home, her so generous resolution much cooled, yet she never lost her desire of being a religious, but pleasures and diversions stifled the motions of Divine grace till the death of her sister-in-law,* who died in childbed, again revived these pious thoughts; yet notwithstanding, the great love she had for her brother still retained her thirteen years in the world, during which time she had often violent conflicts between nature and grace." She entered the Convent in 1707 with her eldest sister, and died in 1731, "a most fervorous religious woman and most faithful to the attracts of God's grace."

In the obit book of the Canonesses is the name of a child of thirteen, "Mary Hancotts, of the family of the Hancotts of Bishoprick."† She was one of three sisters who entered the school in 1693; and was remarkable for her piety and virtue, "mortifying herself at that tender age in things most repugnant to nature." In 1695 she fell seriously ill, and "very earnestly begged that she might be permitted to make the vows of religion in presence of the Community; though her weakness was so great that she could scarcely be heard, yet she read her vows with so clear and intelligible a voice that she seemed to be renewed with the strength which she received by her Joy to die a consecrated Spouse of

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* Catherine, daughter of Sir John Curzon, of Waterperry, Oxford.

† The name generally given to the Prince-Bishopric of Durham, whose Bishops enjoyed almost regal powers.

Christ, as she had resolved to live, if the divine Goodness had pleased to prolong her life. She rendered her happy and innocent soul into the hands of her divine Spouse on the tenth day after her holy Profession. R.I.P. Her sisters provided a marble gravestone. The epitaph that is engraven thereon was made by Revd. Father Lewis Sabran, of the Society of Jesus, on whose direction she had depended with great profit in a little time. In it he calls her Sister Mary Bernard (the name she had chosen), and makes a short compendium of her virtues, as may be seen in our Church by those who understand Latin." It runs thus:

JESUS MARIA AUGUSTINUS.

Soror Maria à Sancto Bernardo ex Antiqua apud Lincolnienses Amcotorum Familia hic sita est nullo Belli Tyrocinio Palmam adepta est Victoriae sine Sponsalibus ad Agni admissa Nuptias quia dilexit Multum Fidelis Administra: Cum accepisset ad perficiendum Turrim Evangelicam uno Mense aedificavit absoluto ante fastigio quam potuisse in terris Fundamentum sit visa. Altum scilicet in Corde posuerat ardentis Pietatis. Obiit die ab emissis votis Religiosis 10. Octobris 13 Anni 1695.

Requiescat in Pace.

The following year we are told "our school was recruited by a good number of Convictresses, for on that day came altogether by one convoy, Mrs. Elizabeth Molyneux, grandchild to the Lord Molyneux, three of Sir Rowland Stanley's daughters, Mrs. Dorothy, Mrs. Elizabeth, and Mrs. Winefred; Mrs. Teresia Strickland, niece to Sister Teresia Mannock, Mr. Stephen Galloway's two daughters, all these came in one ship. The same day came at night Mrs Anne and Mrs Elizabeth Weston, daughters to Mr. Weston of Sutton. Four days later came two of Sir Hugh Smithson's daughters."

In 1695 arrived "little Miss Anne and Miss Mary Jernegan, daughters to Sir Francis Jernegan of Cossy." Both of these entered among the Canonesses later on. Of Anne we are told that even when "in the schoole to which she came very young, she began to practise little mortifications, to make tryall of what she hoped hereafter to do when a religious, and she had so great an esteeme and respect for the house of God that, when not seen, she would kiss the walls, esteeming it an happiness to dwell within them."

"She was perfect in the skill of musick and pleane song," says the annalist, but she ventured to attempt to simplify the latter, "which before was very crabbit and hard to performe," and it was only in recent years that, by the help of Dom Pothier and other restorers of Plain Chant, the pure Gregorian has been re-established in the Communities of Bruges and Haywards Heath.

In 1697 two nieces of Mother Herbert came to school, "the Ladies Mary and Anne Powis,"* and in 1701 there arrived for convictresses "Mrs. Plowden, Mrs. Mary Thirlwall, and little Miss Petre, eldest daughter to Mr. Petre of Fithlars; she is not yet quite six years old.

"In 1710 little Miss Gifford was brought to our school by her nurse; she was then about four years old, and her father, Sir John Gifford, had promised her to my Lady Lucy as soon as the child was born." In 1718 she was appointed to lay the first stone of a new school, "which was blessed by the Reverend Father Slaughter, Rector of the English College at Ghent, and particularly recommended to St Joseph's protection, his statue being placed in the front of the house."

Mary Gifford, who had spent so many years in the school, had no vocation to the religious life, but she "retained so vast an affection to ye house where she had been bred that when she left her mother (daughter to the earl of Middleton) on her re-marriage with Coronell† Rothe, she wished to board at our convent, but found this could not be allowed." At her death in 1759 "she desired that her heart should be buryed in our church." The heart was sent from Paris with a copper or brass plate with the following inscription: "Cy Gyst Le Cœur de haute et Puissante demoiselle Marie Anne Gifford, fille du haut et Puissant Seigneur Messire Jean Gifford, Chevalier Banneret en Angleterre, et de haute et Puissante Dame Catherine Middleton, morte à Paris le 23 Avril 1759 agée de 53 ans. Requiescat in pace." The nuns, however, had the inscription translated into

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* Mary married Joseph, Count Gage, and Anne became the wife of Henry, Lord Arundel of Wardour.

† The spelling shows the old pronunciation: "Sometimes *coronel*, which is the Spanish pronunciation. Dimin. of Ital. *colonna*, a column" (Skeat's Dictionary). "Anciently written Coronel," (Richardson's Dictionary). The old form of the word accounts for the present pronunciation.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

Latin, for the marble slab, which may still be seen in their Church.*

The list of pupils is, in itself, of interest, sometimes recalling names or titles now extinct, as when we read in 1716: " Mr. Edward Blount and his lady came out of England and brought with them the Lord Falconberg's (Fauconberg) three daughters, Mrs. Mary, Miss Ann, and Miss Penelope Bellasis;† also two of her own, Mrs. Mary and Miss Henrietta."

Mary Blount became the wife of the ninth Duke of Norfolk and Henrietta married his brother, Philip Howard, but the memory of their cousin, another little Anne Blount, daughter to Mr. George Blount, will be ever kept in the Convent, for she was the subject of what was considered a miraculous cure, " attested by Father Lewis Sabran and other priests appointed by the Bishop, the witnesses giving their testimony on oath." The account of the child's illness is interesting as showing some of the prevalent beliefs. The child had fallen into fits; " after some of them she was like a changeling and knew nobody; the doctors and several experienced persons affirmed they had never seen or heard of any one in so strange a way, and as we apprehended there might be something of witchcraft or that was not natural in the matter, we got a Bernardine monk to come to her, who was appointed to exorcise and pray over possessed persons, and he came several times and pray'd over her, but this spiritual remedy had no more present effect than the corporal remedies that our doctor had prescribed." The child was at length cured quite suddenly on January 31, 1709, after receiving the Holy Viaticum at her own request, and rising immediately she went to the Church to thank our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Benediction was ordered in thanksgiving, not only on the anniversary of the cure, but on every Thursday throughout the year, a custom which is still kept up, both at Bruges and at the Priory at Haywards Heath.

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* Another slab in the church records the death of one of the "pensioners"; it bears the following inscription:

DEO OPT. MAXIMO
HIC PROPE JACET
PRAENOBILIS PUELLA
CAROLINA MARIA TALBOT
FILIA NOBILISSIMI DOMINI CAROLI TALBOT
EX ANTIQUA ET NOBILISSIMA FAMILIA DE
SHREWSBURY
ET ILLUSTRIS DOMINAE MARIAE
MOSTYN
ANNOS NATA 16
OBIIT AD HUNC CONVENTUM
DIE 10 JANUARII 1782
HOC MARMOR, IN TESTI-
MONIUM SUI AMORIS
AFFLICTA MATER
PONI JUSSIT
R.I.P.

The funeral is thus described: " Six little pensioners dressed in white held the pall. As she was niece to Lord Shrewsbury and her Br. heir apparent to that title and estate, Revd Mother was desirous the burial should be suitable to her rank; therefore three steps were erected in the middle of the church, on which the corpse stood shut up in the coffin (!) surrounded by 18 candles, her Escutcheon fixed on each of them and also on the 12 on the altar, the benches and pavement covered with white. The Mass was sung with two Deacons. She was buried in the vault."

† Their grandfather, Lord Belasyse, had been imprisoned with the fathers of Mother Herbert and Sister Ursula Stafford in 1678, being accused of implication in the Titus Oates Plot; the Barony became extinct in 1750; its last holder was a priest, the Rev. Charles Belasyse.

Another case of the same kind is that of little Anne Howard, who " was brought over by the lady Montagu in 1728 for a convictress, being daughter to Mr. Bernard Howard's eldest son." This child fell ill in 1731 and " received her viaticum, which was the first time she had been to Communion, though she had expressed a great desire to have communicated before, but she was judged too young. During her six weeks' illness, our doctor and surgeon found their remedies had very contrary effects, for if they gave her anything to sleep she never slept a wink and the like of all other applications, which made them consider her illness more than natural, and the surgeon added if it was his child he would have her exorcised. This could not be done without my Lord Bishop's leave, which he granted to our confessor, ordaining him first to fast for three days, and that five of the religious should fast with him. Thus prepared, he communicated the child with the Blessed Sacrament in the chamber: he performed the ceremonies as prescribed by the Church for possessed or bewitched persons." Little Anne was not perfectly cured, though her state greatly improved and it was decided to send her to England. " Her whole comportment during the entire time of her illness was more like a woman advanced in virtue than like a child. She never asked for anything nor ever refused what they gave her to take, however great her reluctance. She was never seen to be out of humour, and her discourse was generally of piety; she seemed a child much prevented by God. What his mercy designs for her the event will tell."

Little could the nuns have foreseen that this child would die imprisoned in France. She had been most reluctant to leave the Cloister of Nazareth, which she probably hoped to enter as a nun, but two years later her parents sent her to the "Blue Nuns" at Paris, and she made her profession there at the age of sixteen. She became abbess and lived to see the Convent seized by the revolutionary government in 1793; in the following year she died while confined with the rest of the Community in the chaplain's quarters."*

The names of Caryll,† Petre, and Fermor, which occur about this time on the list of children received at the English Convent, recall "The Rape of the Lock," but Pope's description of the rising and toilet of the young "lady of fashion" of the period contrasts, indeed, with those of the young "gentlewomen" brought up in Convent schools. For them there was no time for "morning dreams"; long before Sol had shot his tim'rous rays through the white curtains, they were awakened, not by "a guardian sylph," but by a black-veiled nun, charged to see that "ye pensioners are strait laced and well combed," reminding them to say while they "dress their heads": "May my thoughts, which are the hairs of my soul, be cleans'd and purify'd by Holy Fear . . . and since a young damsel cannot forget the finest of her ornaments, may I never forget the most precious ornament of my soul."

In 1768 there is a reference to the medieval custom of allowing children to officiate at the Divine Office both in Monasteries and Cathedrals on the feast of Holy Innocents. "It was decided by the votes of the Community that the pensioners should be excluded from the choir that day, but retain all their other usual privileges."

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* See *The Blue Nuns of Paris* (Catholic Record Society, vol. vii, pp. 246 and 371). Anne Howard was daughter of Bernard Howard of Twyford and Glossop and of Anne Roper, daughter to the fourth Lord Teynham. She was aunt to the twelfth Duke of Norfolk.

† The Carylls of West Grinstead (in whose house, it will be remembered, the incident occurred which led to the quarrel between the Petres and Fermors) are frequently mentioned in the annals. The family gave three members to the Bruges Community; Sisters Barbara and Frances Caryll were daughters of John Caryll and Catharine Petre; Barbara died as Subprioress in 1683, and Frances was professed on her deathbed at the age of sixteen, "a most sweet and innocent soul." Sister Mary Anne Caryll died in 1736.

In 1783, when so many Convents were suppressed by order of Joseph II, the Prioress, Mother More, received a visit which must have caused her some alarm, though she displayed her usual intrepidity. "Two Magistrates of the town, accompanied by the Bishop's secretary, paid Reverend Mother a visit, which they acquainted her, was in consequence of an Imperial Edict, that they read to her, and which, among other things, required all the schools to have an Inspector taken from the Magistrates or Clergy. Reverend Mother with great freedom told them that if such a person was appointed for us, the English parents* would immediately remove their children, for they had not forgotten the treatment their sons and relatives had met with at the suppression of the English Jesuits at Bruges. These gentlemen answered that the reasons she alleged were just, and that she should only receive a visit at the grate once a year from the person appointed, to which she readily assented. They then requested to see the school. It was the feast of the general Mistress, Sister Clare Farrill, the young ladies, to the number of twenty-two, were genteely dressed in white, and the school adorned in a handsome manner, appeared to advantage. These gentlemen admired the fine works these young ladies had wrought, asked many questions, and declared themselves highly satisfied. They sent to Court a most favourable and honourable account of our method of education."

Three years later there is a curious entry regarding the inoculation of two children, which was evidently considered a very serious matter:

"On ye 2d of June Miss Lelia and Miss Harriet Havers went into the country to be inoculated. The Abbot of Eeckoutte was so obliging, at our physician's request, as to lend them his country house for that purpose. They were attended by a lay-sister and a very clever

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* In 1658, for the first time it is recorded that "we this year received Dutch Convictresses." But two years later we find "we now receive no more Dutch convictresses." Nevertheless, from time to time foreign names appear on the school lists, and after the return from Hengrave they increase in number; during the last half-century the Belgian pupils have been in the majority at Bruges, though by the strength of traditions three hundred years old the school has retained its English characteristics. The Haywards Heath school is entirely English.

English servant maid, and returned quite recovered on the 12th of July."

In preceding chapters it has been mentioned that the English girls were sent to their homes when the troubles of the French Revolution began, only four remaining to return to England with the nuns in 1794. The school was continued at Hengrave Hall, and among the children received were some daughters of French emigrants. Thus Félicité de Saisseval is mentioned, whose mother, the Countess de Saisseval had been, as Mademoiselle de Lastic, lady-in-waiting to Madame Victoire (daughter of Louis XV), and had enjoyed the intimate friendship of Madame Elizabeth; she herself was known at Court as "la céleste Saisseval."

When she landed in England in the January of 1795 her youngest child was but a few days old, and the family (twelve in number), knowing no one, went from door to door through the blinding snow from three in the afternoon till midnight before they found a shelter.

Félicité was placed at Hengrave by the kindness of Lady Jerningham. Madame de Saisseval and her daughters were afterwards well known in France for the good works they established there, notably "L'Œuvre des enfants délaissés."

After the Peace of Amiens four of the Hengrave pupils went over to Bruges; the school was soon filled and we hear of English newspapers being read to the children at the time of the Battle of Waterloo.

When the Congress of Vienna placed the Belgian Provinces under William of Holland it seemed as if the days of Joseph II had returned.*

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* In 1821 the annals tell us how "our good venerable Bishop de Broglie was banished from his flock," and how "the Grand Vicars at Ghent were arrested and publickly taken through the streets to the common prison . . . and were daily taken thence and arraigned at the bar as criminals for no other cause than submission to their lawful Bishop." Perpetual vows were prohibited, and it was required that foreign Superiors should be naturalized, which the nuns declared in a letter to the Minister of the Interior they would consider as "une apostasie civile." No professions took place in public, but the Novices "made their engagement to God alone." In 1831 twelve nuns made their public profession together "who had been prevented from so doing by the restrictions of the late government of William of Nassau. . . . They did so with hearts burning to dedicate themselves entirely to their Divine Spouse." One of these survived till 1893. She was a Belgian who claimed descent from Piers Gaveston, the favourite of Edward II, who had given him the hand of his niece, Margaret of Gloucester. The annals admit that the English descent was "remote"!

Letters were received from the Dutch Government and enquiries were made both as to the Community and the school; the chaplain, the Abbé De Foere, wrote petitions and explanations in the name of the nuns and went to visit the Minister of the Interior. The exceptional position of the Convent, as an English establishment, was asserted, and M. De Foere says that "la suppression de cette maison d'éducation, depuis longtemps si généralement et si justement estimée, exciterait probablement une sensation pénible dans l'esprit public." The school is said to be for English children, though the nuns have received "quelques demoiselles natives du pays," and, as the English nuns cannot teach them French or Flemish, a few "dames natives" have also been admitted to Profession, but no authority, civil or ecclesiastic, has ever interfered with "notre discipline particulière et nos coutumes anglaises."

Both letters and visits seem to have been received very graciously, and the Convent followed the advice given it after the French Revolution of "taking such privileges as they required," and was left unmolested and uninspected. The letters written at this time are of interest, but the whole subject of the difficulties put in the way of Catholic Education by the Dutch Government has been very fully treated of recently in the Life of the Superior General of Notre Dame.*

In 1827 "the Concordat signed by Pope Leo XII and King William was published, and gave us some hopes of seeing our grievances in religious matters, in part, redressed," but no definite answer to the petition, sent up in 1826, had been received when, in 1829, William of Holland came to Bruges and on June 2 paid a visit to the Convent.

"The street, as far as our Convent extends, was planted with fir trees. The King entered by the door near the Sacristy; he was constantly attended by our director (M. De Foere) on one side, and by the Prioress and Subprioress on the other; the Burgomaster, the Governor, chamberlain, two aides-de-camp, two sheriffs, the Commander of the Yeomanry [*garde civique* ?] followed to the work room. Here we spoke some time regarding our affairs, recommending our petitions, to which his Majesty was pleased to answer that he would consider them and endeavour to have our affairs settled before the celebration of the second hundred years of our establishment here. Thence the King went to the School, where the works of the pensioners were exposed, and on our saying they were too poor for us to presume to offer any, he graciously said: They would be pleasing to the Queen and to the Princess Marianne."

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* *Life of Mère St Joseph* (Longmans, Green and Co.).

Later on the Abbé De Foere went to Brussels to present to the Queen and Princess "a large pair of folding screens of red velvet embroidered with gold, a work basket of white satin likewise embroidered," which drew forth a "gracious" letter of thanks, but the King seems to have been still "considering our affairs" when, in 1830, "the Belgians who for fifteen years had reluctantly submitted to the Stadholder, made King of the New Kingdom of the Low countries in 1814, imitated the example of France, which in July revolted against Charles X. . . . Our Confessor, M. De Foere, was chosen deputy for Bruges."

In 1817, a child of thirteen, Astérie de Draeck,* had entered the school, in which she remained for many years, and some of her reminiscences were written by her daughter, who became Comtesse Thierry de Limburg-Stirum.

Astérie was in the school when the Crown Prince and Princess of the Netherlands paid the Convent a visit, which the annals do not even mention, but of which she gave a lively account: "There were compliments, singing, offerings of flowers, etc. The Prince was most amiable. The Princess (Anne Paulovna, sister of the Czar Alexander I.) told us that in her youth she had had thoughts of entering one of the Greek Convents in her country. The Chamberlains were in frequent request for the suite was very numerous and many persons tried to join themselves to it so as to get into the enclosure; the Chaplain's quarters were full of people, and some forced their way in. One of the most noticeable persons present was the Princess de Chimay, who had been Madame Tallien, and it was said, that she had urged Tallien to bring about the fall of Robespierre and herself contributed to it by the influence which her beauty and her wit won for her. She had been nicknamed 'Notre Dame de Thermidor.' Though she had married the

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* Her grandmother was a Gage, belonging to a branch of the family which had settled in the Low Countries. "The relationship," says Madame de Limburg-Stirum, "ensured a favourable reception at the English Convent for Astérie and her sisters Stéphanie and Savina."

Prince de Chimay, she was not received into society at Brussels."

A strange visitor this indeed for the old cloister!

Among the suite of the Crown Prince was the Comte de Thiennes, a man of over forty, who was struck by the "genteel behaviour" of the fifteen-year-old Astérie de Draeck, with whose family he was acquainted, and when she left school he asked for her hand. She became his wife in 1826, and always retained the greatest affection for her old school.

Another visit which Astérie remembered was that of an English Princess (Elizabeth, third daughter of George III, wife of the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg). Her entrance is very briefly mentioned in the annals, but the old Comtesse de Thiennes would tell how, when the Landgravine arrived, the Nuns had prepared a grand reception for her ("un superbe accueil"), but she appeared in a travelling dress (*très négligé*), was not at all "distinguished" (ce que l'on reprochait d'ailleurs aux filles de George III), "and her pockets were stuffed with oranges and even apples . . . provisions for the journey," it was said, but though "the Princess appeared good and quite at her ease with the nuns, they seemed to suffer somewhat from the unfavourable impression their princess produced on the Belgian pupils."

Astérie de Draeck kept records of certain "conversations" held in presence of the Community, in which she had taken her part, gravely discussing with other pensioners such subjects as the Causes of the Decay of Religion in Europe, the Revolt of the American Colonies, the characters of Charles XII and of Louis XVI, whose misfortunes, in the eyes of the youthful debaters, were "a chastisement for the protection he gave the Americans in their revolt against the Mother-Country, and were accepted by him as such." Other subjects treated of are Mythology and the advantages of Silence—all sprinkled with plentiful allusions to ancient and sacred History.

There is no doubt that the school passed through the phase referred to in a recent Conference at Ushaw; a time when the *Christian Brothers' Geography and Arithmetic*, *Murray's Grammar*, *The Child's Guide to Knowledge*, and *Magnall's Questions* afforded the mental pabulum provided for the children, and one might add to these *Pinnock's Catechism*, *Blair's Preceptor*, and the *Use of the Globes*. It was only during the second half of the nineteenth century that the Canonesses awoke to the fact that to the carefully garnered treasures of the past it was necessary to add modern educational methods, just as to the old School, of which the foundation stone was laid by little " Mrs. Mary Gifford " in 1718, were added in 1911 the large buildings which were so soon to harbour wounded soldiers instead of schoolgirls.

But it is time to close the annals. As we turn over their pages, yellow with age, we seem to see a long procession of children and young girls. After a glance at the close-capped, many coated, little Dutch maidens at St Ursula's, we watch " ye little convictress " Margaret Clement, " walking so sweetly among the religious that they loved her exceedingly," and submitting meekly to be sharply " exercised by ye oulde nunn of King Harry's dayes."

Then come the smiling faces of the children of Cavaliers who, as they fell at Naseby or Worcester, found comfort in the thought that their little daughters were safe overseas. We see the " young Gentlewomen pensioners " taking off their ruffles and pinning up their long skirts when they returned from the " quire," where they had been reciting Our Lady's Office in Latin, and then laboriously learning to " wright and cast accounts," making " a handsome curtesy " if their mistress chanced to sneeze, and in all things behaving themselves " as becomes their birth and breeding."

So the procession of bright-faced children passes on till we see the ringleted " young ladies " of the early Victorian period in their many-flounced white muslin dresses.*

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* The illustration at the beginning of this chapter is from a drawing made at the time by Lady Bedingfield (mother of one of the nuns), who accompanied Queen Victoria when, in 1843, she paid a visit to the school. She is leaning on the arm of King Leopold I; the Queen of the Belgians is seen behind her with the Prince Consort. With the royal party were Lords Liverpool and Aberdeen, Lord Charles Wellesley, Lady Canning, Sir Hamilton and Lady Seymour, the Bishop and Governor of Bruges, the Burgomaster (Baron de Pélichy), etc. Queen Victoria " seemed altogether pleased and expressed her admiration of the richness and precision of the children's singing. The house was decorated with evergreens and flowers, but all was in perfect simplicity and neatness which became the Convent better than any other decoration. An account of the visit was inserted in the newspaper called the *Tablet*." It is to be regretted that we have no details of the visit to the School of Mgr. Pecci, the future Leo XIII, on May 6 of the following year. He was Nuncio at Brussels, and entered accompanied by the Bishops of Bruges and Ghent. A marble slab in the cloister now commemorates the event.

LOWER TENNIS COURT

THE WOODS

THE CALVARY

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(VIEWS OF THE PRIORY, HAYWARDS HEATH)

What surprised glances they and their predecessors of Queen Anne's reign would have cast on the short-haired, short-skirted girl of to-day, equipped for tennis or hockey. Alas! Doubtless, costume and manners and language would have been judged very unbecoming " parsons of birth and breeding "!

Perhaps the present-day girl would find herself most at home with the " convictresses " of late Tudor and of Stuart times; the children of the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries might pore together over some " vain book of Virgil," though the earlier generation would be puzzled to hear it called " a set book "; they, too, could explain with ease the meaning of many a word in *Macbeth* or *King Lear*, now painfully learnt from a glossary or made the subject of lengthy annotations.

And what modern girl would not be interested to hear thrilling tales of priest hunts recounted by those who had perhaps played their part in them, like hot-blooded little Frances Burrowes, who had braved the pursuivant's dagger and his threats of instant death.

But all the pupils of the Canonesses, to whatever generation they belong, would find much in common —expressions and ways of acting that have come down through the centuries and form part of the school tradition.

A modern writer* has emphasized the importance in Oxford of to-day of an all-pervading " something " which has come down to her from her monastic past, an atmosphere that in a few years changes the raw undergraduate into a refined and cultured man, hall-marked with the stamp of his Alma Mater.

The old Convent schools with their roots deep buried in the past have still about them by reason of the force of traditions and customs this clinging atmosphere of other days; it is for the nuns to see that it be not allowed to grow musty, but that the fresh air of progress keep it strong and vivifying.

If such schools, in their desire to keep apace with modern thought, do not discard, with old-fashioned methods, that noble simplicity which constitutes their special educational value, living in them should have on the scholars of to-day something of that same influence that life in a house filled with great traditions exerts.*

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* Stephen Leacock.

What enables Convent schools to adapt themselves to changing educational methods, is the idea underlying the semi-monastic scheme, which inspired the educational legislation of the Middle Ages—the conviction of the necessity of ministering to the soul's needs, of teaching the things which are eternally the basis of education, the undying and never changing truths, with the formation of character as the final goal.

When this is kept in view the work of education does not interfere with the monastic spirit of a house, nor with the fulness of its liturgical life. An old mystic, already quoted at the beginning of this chapter, says:

"He who possesses, sees and loves but God, and all things for God, is sheltered from the danger of multiplicity, he is not dependent on places or company. Far from drawing him away from unity, multiplicity itself is unified by the purity of his love. He finds God in all things . . . God acts in him, for he who is the principal cause of an act is its chief author. . . . The presence of God is not an outward separation from external things; it is a solitude of the mind; if you possess this solitude it will enable you to penetrate to such depths that persons and things will lose all power of distracting you."

One of the religious of the English Convent, who did much to spread knowledge and love of Blessed John Ruysbroeck, verified this passage of his writings in a most striking manner, and no account of the Bruges school would be complete without a short notice on her.

Mother Anne Joseph Liefmans held for nearly twenty years the office of General Mistress, yet her spirit of prayer was such that in this busy employment, involving so much intercourse with the outside world, she seemed ever to move in an atmosphere of recollection. Though all her Sisters knew the kindness with which she received all who sought her help or counsel, yet they would sometimes hesitate to break in upon the communion with God which seemed to be her very life.

A lover of silence, as are all contemplative souls, when she spoke, her words were full of power, issuing as they

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* In 1915 a writer in *La femme Belge* (Père Willaert, S.J.) says that though the Canonesses of the English Convent, Bruges, still perpetuate the traditions of a religious movement dating from the fourteenth century and retain much that is medieval in their monastic life, yet " leur enseignement est très à jour, très moderne."

Mother Anne Joseph

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did from a heart impregnated with God's presence. A singular devotion to the Blessed Trinity was among the gifts of this favoured soul, and those who knew her can never forget the way in which she would exclaim: "O Beata Trinitas!" on the feast of that greatest of mysteries.

The prayer to Blessed John Ruysbroeck, which she inserted in the book of devotions compiled by her for the use of the school,* throws some light on her own interior life; it is of her composition, and surely Blessed John Ruysbroeck heard her earnest petition that "her life so full of labour might be all for God," while his words, "I remember God . . . the Eternal, supreme, and all-magnificent God," are an apt expression of her own spirit of reverent loving adoration.

Her work in the school was most wonderfully blest; she had a remarkable power of influence which the most wayward natures could not withstand. Her prudence and judgement were such that all who came in contact with her gave her their complete confidence, which was ever used to draw souls nearer to God, in Whose service she did not know what it was to spare herself. Even when she retired to rest only at midnight, she was in the Choir next morning at 4.30, ready to join her Sisters in the Divine Office.

She died, worn out by her labours for God and the souls committed to her charge, at the comparatively early age of forty-eight.

In her last years God gave her what He never denies to His Saints—a share in the Passion of His Son. A long illness conformed her to "the likeness of Jesus crucified," by agonizing pain, borne with unwavering courage, while darkness and anguish took possession of her soul till it seemed that she shared in His final dereliction and might exclaim with Him: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The end came in perfect peace on July 23, 1897. Her memory is held in benediction, not only by her sisters, but by the many whom she trained to be Christian wives and mothers, who still seek the inspiration of their lives in the profound impression made on them by her religious instructions.

Far better than precept does contact with such a soul draw children to have, in the words of the old Rule, " A generous courage and a free liberal heart towards God."

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* *Flowers of Nazareth*, printed by Desclée, Belgium, but may be had of Burns Oates and Washbourne, London, or from the Cloister of Nazareth, Bruges, and Our Lady's Priory, Haywards Heath, Sussex.

There is, perhaps, rather a general impression that the special value of Convent education is that it is a safeguard to the innocence of children, removing them from so much that is unlovely and evil in the modern world. But besides this negative fact, of which some would dispute the benefit, on the plea that such seclusion unfits for the battle of life, there is a positive advantage of far greater importance. For, if the great end of moral education is to draw out the latent capacity for the fulfilment of duty, at the cost of self-sacrifice, by supplying sufficient motive-power to the will, surely it cannot be in vain that at an age " when nature is soft and flexible," when the heart is yet unspoiled and is impressionable to what is noble, children should see and be in daily contact with souls who have felt the pressure of God's love on their wills urging them to undertake a life of continual sacrifice, and that not for any immediate tangible result but for one that is of the domain of Faith. Children thus learn that true joy is found, not in self-indulgence, but in self-sacrifice, and they are daily witnesses of lives governed, not by utilitarianism, but by the Charity of Christ—" Caritas Christi urget nos." It is that Charity which spurs on souls to devote their lives both to the apostolate of prayer and to that of education.

By this double apostolate the Canonesses of St Augustine strive to spread, as their Rule enjoins, " the sweet odour of Christ,"* and the children brought up in the quiet cloister have not shown themselves unworthy of its traditions—traditions blending the spirit of à Kempis with that of our English Martyrs.

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* "May the Lord grant that you may keep all these things with holy love, being inflamed with the love of spiritual beauty, and by a holy conversation spreading the sweet odour of Christ, not as slaves under the Law, but as free-born under Grace" (last chapter of *Rule of St Augustine*).

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